MEMOIRS

OF THE

MONTAGUE FAMILY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

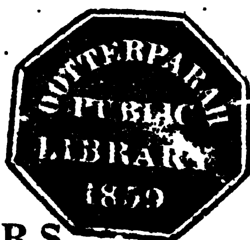
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MEMOIRS,

&c.

CHAP. I.

THE next morning Sidney arose recovered from her late indisposition, and in a frame of mind prepared to fulfil the task she had allotted to herself, of meeting and repelling with contemptuous indifference any farther insult Sedley might be disposed to offer.

Anna, on joining her, told her she had learned from Fanny that Major Sedley had quitted the house very soon after they had left the drawing-room on the preceding evening,—though what reason he had assigned for doing so Fanny had not informed her, nor did she wish to set her prying ill-nature on the watch by inquiring.

Charles, on meeting her, expressed great pleasure at seeing her so much recovered,

but advised her not to leave the house; and Mrs. Montague concurring in this opinion, she gladly yielded to their wishes.

Of Charles she saw little more during the remainder of the day, as he dined with Mr. Radcliffe; and still less on the succeeding one, as he spent it on a hunting party with the officers, and dined with them at G——; but the day after she received a note from Mrs. Enesy, informing her that Mr. Enesy had in the morning left home, and that taking advantage of her kind promise to spend a few days with her, she would call for her about two o'clock.

Sidney prepared with alacrity for a visit that would so opportunely assist in restoring her tranquillity, and which would save her from any chance of seeing Major Sedley except occasionally, till she had succeeded in acquiring composure. That, however she could not hope to do while she remained at Belle Vue, as the Montagues had a round of engagements to parties given in honour of Charles's birth-day, in which she must unavoidably have joined had she remained there, and

at most of which she must perhaps have met the Major. She felt the greatest satisfaction in recollecting that he had overheard Mrs. Enesy's invitation, as well as her ready acceptance of it, before she could have possibly believed him capable of the conduct he had practised; he could not therefore flatter his vanity with the supposition that she had flown from Belle Vue merely because she felt his presence too painful to support. Anna also highly approved of her temporary absence, and expressed many kind wishes that she would feel her spirits perfectly restored before her return.

At the appointed hour Mrs. Enesy arrived; and, after sitting some time with Mrs. Montague, who could not but feel regret at parting with Sidney, they set out for Mount Enesy. On their arrival, they were rapturously welcomed by the children, who eagerly told Sidney their mamma had given them a holiday for the purpose of enjoying her society; and Sidney, resolving to lose no time in setting about the hard task of subduing her feelings, compelled herself to enter into all

their little sports and pastimes, till at length she felt a transient relief in their artless gaiety and endearing caresses.

When left to nature and herself, however, her spirits sunk in proportion to their temporary exertion; but, assiduously struggling to acquire not only apparent but real composure, she neither gave way to useless regrets nor transient starts of passion: her pride had received a deep wound, and, though it banished every feeling of tenderness from her breast, it could neither lessen her astonishment at the unlooked-for duplicity of Sedley's conduct, nor fill up the vacuum left in her heart.

Mrs. Enesy had too much penetration, and too sincere an affection for Sidney, not to perceive that something had occurred deeply to shock her feelings, and depress her spirits; but, too delicate to hint her suspicions, and too kind to feel offended at a reserve she was certain a sense of propriety imposed, she exerted her utmost efforts to enliven and entertain her, without appearing to notice her dejection. Observing that Sidney seemed

to feel unfeigned pleasure in her present abode, and that she gave no hint of wishing to return to Belle Vue, but rather hinted a desire of remaining with her till her husband's return. Mrs. Enesy was confirmed in the suspicion that she had unguardedly suffered her affections to become engaged to young Montague; and that, conscious of her error, she sought to repair it. This idea, however ill founded, enabled her to direct her efforts in the proper way, by trying to amuse and strengthen her mind, without any direct reference to the subject of her uneasiness.

Soothed by her kindness, calmed by her gentleness and her fortitude, and roused by her judicious arguments and advice, which, though calculated for the general conduct of life, she applied to her own situation, Sidney became gradually more cheerful. A sense of duty coming to her aid, still farther enabled her to tranquillize her spirits; and, with unaffected gratitude to Mrs. Enesy, she sought to convince her how sensibly she felt her kindness. But pride prevented any mention of a transaction she considered as degrading to

herself, and which, to any person who had not been an eye-witness, might have conveyed an idea of folly, or perhaps impropriety, in her having too hastily ascribed sentiments to Sedley which he had never entertained.

Sidney had been about a week at Mount Enesy, during which time she had neither seen nor heard of Major Sedley, when, one morning, as she was sitting with the children in the drawing-room, a servant announced him. On first addressing her he appeared confused; but Sidney replying with cold politeness to his inquiry if she now felt restored to her accustomed health, he instantly recovered his composure.

Sidney, then addressing one of the little girls, desired her to go up to her mamma's room, and tell her Major Sedley was in the drawing-room.

William, who was a particular favourite of the Major's, now amused him with his innocent prattle, and shewed him a great many soldiers painted by Sidney; of whom he spoke with such eager and artless enthusiasm, that Sedley's countenance became violently agitated,

so much so that William observed it, and asked, with some surprise, if any thing was the matter?

"No, no," cried he hastily, though in a suffocated voice; "but tell me, my dear William, when does your father return?"

"I don't know," replied the boy, "but I suppose mamma can tell you."

"Mr. Enesy will return the latter end of next week, sir," said Sidney, with perfect steadiness, though a view of the Major's emotion had involuntarily alarmed her.

The Major bowed, but was evidently unable to make any reply. Mrs. Enesy coming into the room, he was obliged to recollect himself; but his manner was so altered, that much surprised, she expressed a hope that he had received no unpleasant intelligence

"Some events have occurred within the last few months," replied he, colouring very high, "that have not been very pleasing to me; I did not, however, hear of them till lately, and they have so much occupied my time and attention, that I have not been able to wait on ou as usual."

Mrs. Enesy expressed her sorrow at this intelligence in a manner that evinced how truly she sympathized in his feelings, though ignorant of their source: she then changed the subject.

When he was gone, Mrs. Enesy exclaimed with some warmth, "How much I regret that any thing has occurred so seriously to distress poor Major Sedley, for he is one of the best and most truly correct young men I know; but it only serves still farther to convince us, my dear Sidney, of the melancholy truth of my last night's observation,—that this world is a scene of trial; and that, as such, no beauty, rank, or goodness, can secure us from meeting the woes so inevitably entailed on weak and erring humanity;—happiest are those who best endure and least deserve them.

This unfortunate speech completely overset poor Sidney's fortitude; and, unable to answer, she sat silent; when Mrs. Enesy, perceiving her so much affected, rose, and, saying she must give some orders to one of the servants, left the room, to give Sidney time to recover her

composure, without letting her suspect she had observed her emotion.

This Sidney found no easy task, as Major Sedley's manner, and Mrs. Enesy's remark had merely served to involve his conduct in tenfold intricacy. How was it possible that Mrs. Enesy, who had known him from childhood, could be thus deceived in his character and principles? Was it probable, too, that Colonel Coote, at his advanced period of life, with daughters of his own, would have expressed himself so strongly when he considered the Major in imminent danger, if it was undeserved? For, however lightly Mr. French, or even Captain Elmore, might have viewed his conduct, Colonel Coote must have been an adequate judge: and, the more the mist of passion dissipated, the less could Sidney believe such utter disregard to all the feelings of honour and delicacy could exist in the breast of a man of Colonel Coote's years, situation, and character.

The agitation of Major Sedley's manner also convinced her that feelings of some kind he certainly possessed; though whether those

of shame or regret predominated, she knew not, and, the more she reflected, the more she became bewildered; for if, as his information to Mrs. Enesy might bear to be interpreted, (if that, too, was not deception) any unexpected barrier had arisen through his own family, or in his own affairs, why not candidly confess it? Why have recourse to the mean affectation of resentment, to disguise his situation, and induce Captain Elmore to adopt similar conduct? "Let me," cried she, with increasing distress, "endeavour, if possible, to drive the whole transaction from my mind. I cannot fix on any probable motive for his conduct; and why thus needlessly harass myself?"

In pursuance of this resolution Sidney arose, and, in compliance with the children's earnest entreaties, went to walk with them, hoping their cheerfulness might serve to dissipate her thoughts.

At some distance from the house she met Charles Montague, who informed her he had come to know when she intended to return to Belle-Vue, as he felt the house very lonely in her absence.

"Not till Mr. Enesy's return," replied Sidney; "I have consented, at Mrs. Enesy's request, to stay with her till then."

Against this resolution Charles was prevented from remonstrating by the presence of the children; and, after conversing with her for some time, he rode on to the house, to pay Mrs. Enesy a visit.

In vain did Sidney struggle to regain the same degree of tranquillity she had acquired previous to Major Sedley's visit: the effort was fruitless. Conjectures, which she could only consider as the wild chimeras of the moment, incessantly haunted her; and, unable to fix with even an appearance of probability on any other solution of the inexplicable mystery, Fanny Montague again occurred to her as the person who must have influenced the Major's conduct; and this also accounted for Captain Elmore's manner, without affixing to him a degree of baseness it was not rational to suppose any man, possessed of the commonest feelings of honour, capable of practising. No unwillingness that she felt to

attribute such meanness and falsehood to Fanny, or such folly to Sedley, could banish it from her mind, or eradicate her anxiety to develop the cause of so extraordinary a change; though the certainty that, let Sedley account as he would for his conduct, he was not the superior character her tenderness and youthful fancy had pictured him, moderated her impatience, though it depressed her spirits. Her increasing dejection Mrs. Enesy observed with added concern; but, still influenced by the belief that Charles Montague was the object of her affections, and that she was no less the object of his, though greater knowledge of the world enabled him not only better to disguise his feelings, but to regulate them, she imputed it entirely to some information he had given her on the day of his visit to Mount Enesy. She almost felt tempted to ask her confidence, and to give her the advice she seemed so much to require; but a reflection of the indelicacy of such a step, or of seeming to notice dejection so cautiously concealed, so evidently struggled against, withheld her; and,

after much deliberation, she determined not in any way to interfere, unless Sidney voluntarily applied to her.

The ensuing week, like the preceding one, was passed by Sidney in fruitless endeavours to attain composure. Mr. Enesy returned at the expiration of that period; and Anna immediately despatched a note to Sidney, to say that Charles would go for her on the following day; and requesting she would not prolong her stay, as Charles and herself felt equally anxious for her return.

On the receipt of this note, Sidney announced her intentions of going back to Belle Vue on the following morning, though Mrs. Enesy, with affectionate earnestness, entreated her to prolong her stay; but Sidney, afraid of exciting Charles's surprise, and consequent inquiries, which, while so ill able to unravel Sedley's conduct, she feared to answer, so steadily, though gently, refused compliance, that Mrs. Enesy soon forbore to press her solicitations, but warmly declared the obligation her company had already conferred, and the regret she would feel at being deprived of

her society; and Mr. Enesy, with equal cordiality, expressed his thanks for her so kindly devoting her time to enliven Mrs. Enesy's solitude, in preference to partaking of the gaieties of Belle Vue.

Sidney was received, on her return, by Mrs. Montague, with the same kindness with which she had parted from her, and by Fanny and Miss Watkins with similar indifference; but Anna seemed delighted to see her, and immediately accompanied her to her room.

She then began to speak of Major Sedley. "He is more inexplicable than ever," cried she; "and I cannot tell what opinion to form of him, as I am now convinced he loves you; let his conduct be what it may."

"Why?" said Sidney, with unguarded eagerness; "why do you think so?"

"I will tell you all, and then form your own conclusions. I have behaved to him and Captain Elmore so exactly in the way that I have always done, that they never suspected me of knowing any thing of the matter; and I had, therefore, a better opportunity of watching Major Sedley's conduct than I should

otherwise have had; I perceived that, in spite of all his endeavours to assume his usual ease, he was very unhappy; and that Captain Elmore watched him with a degree of attention that convinced me he thought so too. This, however, was not all. The other morning I was sitting in the drawing-room window, and I had let down the curtain to prevent aunt Watkins from observing what book I was reading, if she should happen to come into the room, as it was one I knew she would have taken from me; when the Major, who breakfasted here, came in alone, and, without seeing me, walked up to the view you may recollect you drew of the old castle for papa, and stood looking at it for several moments, when he sighed very deeply; but Charles just then calling him, he started and grew quite red, and hurried away, as if he was afraid that any person should observe him. I was glad, on seeing him appear so confused, that he had not perceived me, though at first I felt inclined to make a noise, to let him know that I was in the room. All I can think is, that something, I cannot guess what, has occurred

to prevent his declaring his sentiments; and that, though he might at first have felt angry at your refusing to tell him what had distressed you, that is not now the case; though he chooses to keep up an appearance of resentment, to avoid coming to any explanation."

This recital still farther confirmed the suspicion Sidney had formed of Fanny's interference; but, thinking it every way improper to hazard such a conjecture to Anna, she replied, with a forced smile, that since, at all events, the affair was over, the less she thought of it the better.

She now met Major Sedley frequently, though he by no means came to Belle Vue so often as formerly, but could not from his conduct draw any farther inference. He betrayed no sympton of agitation, no trace of resentment. His manner to her was uniformly tranquil and polite, distant and ceremonious; and Captain Elmore's precisely of the same stamp; and to both she behaved with the same formal good breeding and cool indifference they had themselves adopted.

The depression of the Major's spirits was

however, too obvious to escape the observation of the family, who all attributed it to some domestic occurrence; Fanny, with malevolent pleasure, remarking, that he at last seemed endued with some portion of sensibility, invulnerable as he had professed himself to the arrows of Cupid; and hinted, she supposed some love affair, of which they had never heard, had taken an unfortunate turn, or that, perhaps his mistress might have forsaken him.

These remarks tended still farther to confirm Sidney's suspicions; but, as any chance of discovering their truth seemed every day more improbable, she with more assiduous care confined them to her own bosom. Charles, to her utter surprise, never dropped a hint of the change he could not fail to remark; whatever was his opinion, he carefully concealed it; and as Mr. and Mrs. Montague, from having been taught to suspect her affections were so differently engaged, had never entertained the most distant idea of her attachment to Sedley, from their observations she had nothing to apprehend.

Sidney had been about a week returned to Belle Vue, when, one morning she and Anna were sitting together in the drawing-room, Mrs. Montague, Miss Watkins, and Fanny, having gone out to pay morning visits, Charles, Major Sedley, and Captain Elmore, entered the room, having been driven in from the grounds, through which they were shooting, by a violent shower of rain.

Sidney, who was painting hand-screens, conversed for some time after their entrance in a general manner, as she cautiously avoided the slightest appearance of dejection or singularity in the presence of either; but on Anna sitting down to the piano, at Captain Elmore's request, she again resumed her employment.

Meanwhile Major Sedley proceeded to a sofa, and, throwing himself on it, took up a book, and pretended to read; but his thoughts so evidently wandered, that he at length suffered the book to close without observing he had done so.

Charles, who was strolling round the room, at length seemed to perceive the Major's ab-

straction, and, going suddenly up to him, he slapped him on the back, exclaiming, "What the deuce is the matter with you, Sedley? what has done you up so confoundedly?"

"Nothing is the matter with me," replied he, starting; "but my thoughts were at that moment somewhat engaged."

"You need not trouble yourself to give me that information, my dear fellow, I am not so stupid as to require it; all I want to know is, what they were engaged about? Some dear and far-distant heroine, was it?"

"No, really," said the Major, forcing a laugh, "they were occupied by something infinitely more serious, though of what nature you must excuse me from avowing."

"A mere come off, upon my honour!" exclaimed Charles; "and I must beg leave to be excused from crediting you. Pray, Sidney, do you believe such an assertion?—Is there any thing more serious to you than thinking of your dear and far-distant swain?"

"Near, or distant," replied Sidney, in great agitation at this unexpected reference to her, "I cannot consider it a matter of very great moment."

"Most sympathetic, I vow!" cried Charles, laughing. "Major, do you credit her?"

"I cannot say," replied he, haughtily, "that I understand the purport of your question."

"Suppose then I state it more explicitly."

"If you choose it I can have no objection," said Sedley, coldly; "but you cannot suppose my curiosity much interested on a subject I so little comprehend."

"Faith! that is not a very gallant declaration, I must take the liberty of saying," returned Charles, laughing, "when, you must understand, the question I meant to state was, how much of Sidney's time you supposed she dedicated to thinking of an absent admirer."

"Miss Montague must pardon my want of gallantry in favour of my sincerity," cried the Major, with great emphasis: "to the one quality I *have aspired*, as it has ever commanded my most genuine admiration; the other I have always esteemed a very secondary consideration."

Sidney, who had listened to this singular dialogue with great uneasiness, unable to guess what Charles could intend by so strange a

mode of conduct, now felt herself called on to speak, and, with some haughtiness, replied, "As your want of gallantry, sir, has given me no offence, it requires no apology :—Sincerity has been too hackneyed a subject to need a comment from me."

Major Sedley changed colour, but made no reply ; and Charles, bursting into a laugh, exclaimed, "Into what endless labyrinths of mortification does credulity lead us silly mortals ! I wonder if it would be possible for any person to deceive me."

The moment Charles uttered these words, fire flashed from Sedley's eyes ; and, starting up, he fiercely laid hold of his arm, exclaiming, "If your intention is to insult me, sir, I am prepared how to act. You will not find me so convenient a butt for ridicule as you found Mr. Lennon."

"If you consider yourself insulted, sir," cried Charles, forcing away his arm, and offended by the Major's words and gestures, "you know your redress."

Major Sedley uttered not a word in reply, but, taking up his hat, left the room.—

Captain Elmore, who, from the moment Sedley had been thrown off his guard, had attempted to interfere, but had been prevented by the angry rapidity of both, now exclaimed, "How, Montague, could you offer so deliberate an insult to Sedley? From you I could not have expected such conduct."

"I did not intend any insult to him," cried Charles, angrily; "I was merely jesting; but he, or no man, shall venture to threaten me, or to remind me that I am not speaking to a coward with impunity."

"Will you allow me to tell Sedley so?" said Elmore, speaking in a very low voice. "I know it must and will be extremely disagreeable to him to enter into any unpleasant explanation with the son of a man to whom he owes such serious obligations; and one, too, whom he has so long considered as a friend; but, whatever are his feelings, without some concession from you, he cannot in honour avoid it; and, surely, if you did not intend to offend him, you will not hesitate to say so with the candour of true bravery."

Charles deliberated for some moments, and

then replied, in a tone somewhat softened from the anger with which he had at first spoken, "However well I am convinced of your honour and your friendship, Elmore, I must decline giving such a commission to you, or to any man. If Major Sedley has no wish to quarrel, neither have I: and, if he consents to an amicable meeting, I will, without hesitation, tell him I neither did nor could have meant any insult by the folly I uttered; but I must insist on a similar concession from him; and that he also retracts the injurious threats he has expressed."

"His words were the mere effect of passion," replied Captain Elmore, "and not intended in the light you have taken them; as threat he could not have meant to use. I will now follow him; and trust me for acting with honour towards you, even though Sedley is my friend."

He then left the room, when Sidney, who had witnessed this whole scene in an agony of distress and terror, though not daring to interfere from a dread of irritating, by an appearance of seeking to influence Charles, said

"Oh Charles! my dear Charles! how could you so wantonly, so needlessly, engage in a quarrel with Major Sedley? Why, or for what purpose, have you done so?"

"I neither have done so nor will do so," replied he, with some emotion, "unless he forces me to it in my own defence; and that, from Elmore's conduct, I do not think probable: but you must both give me your solemn assurance that not a syllable of this transaction passes the lips of either: if you do not do so this moment, I will leave the house, and render any interference impossible."

Sidney and Anna, equally alarmed from a dread of the consequences that might ensue from their refusing or complying with this demand, stood silent and irresolute; till, on seeing Charles hastily snatch up his hat, they at the same moment uttered the desired promise. Charles, then recovering his temper, said with calmness, "No need for all this alarm, my dear girls! there is no chance of any serious ending to this nonsensical affair; so you need not be terrified. I shall still be in the way to annoy and torment you."

"You never torment any person who does not deserve it," cried Anna, angrily, "and only for your sake I should be glad to have the Major suffer for his petulance and"—ill conduct, she was going to add, but, suddenly checking herself, said—rudeness.

"Don't be unjust through regard to me, Anna; I should not have teased Sedley, when I saw he was out of spirits,—but it is past now, and I cannot help it."

Sidney's astonishment at hearing Charles say this was unbounded, as, she had hitherto believed that resentment for the part Major Sedley had acted towards her had influenced his conduct, however singular the mode in which he had evinced it, but now she could no longer think so, and with increased wonder reflected on the past: for that Charles seemed in his own mind to acquit Sedley appeared indisputable; though why she could not conjecture, or why he so cautiously avoided any allusion to the subject. Again Fanny occurred to her, and she was convinced that Charles also suspected her, though he might not choose to avow it. A recollection of Major

Sedley's own words confirmed her in the supposition, as he had indirectly accused her of insincerity; and, as, from the indignation he had betrayed at Charles's raillery, in some way inexplicable to her, he seemed to consider himself ill treated.

She was still pondering on a subject that appeared every hour to grow more intricate, when the door opening, Major Sedley and Captain Elmore entered together; and, the latter addressing Charles, said with a smile, "As you would not trust me with explaining your conduct to Sedley, I have merely requested him to return, that this foolish business may be settled as speedily as possible, on the terms you proposed."

Charles, going forward, said, though not without some embarrassment, "A moment's reflection must, I think, have convinced you, Major Sedley, I could not have intended any offence by the nonsense I uttered; and that no such motive did or could have influenced my conduct, I now most seriously assure you."

"I have suffered myself to be strangely transported by a degree of foolish irritation,

not very natural to my disposition," replied he, colouring very high, "and can in no other way account for the offence I took at your words. For the impropriety of those I addressed to you I am sincerely sorry, as I should regret extremely to forfeit the friendship you have in so many ways evinced towards me."

"To say truth," cried Charles, recovering his gaiety, "I think we may give the whole piece of business the title of Shakespeare's play, "*Much ado about Nothing;*" then, holding out his hand, added more seriously, "Upon my soul, Sedley, you are the last man I know that I would willingly offend: and I earnestly hope that the past may be buried in oblivion; and, if you have ever considered me as your friend, that you will still view me as such; for such most assuredly I am, though I could not forbear tormenting you when an opportunity offered; but, upon my honour, I meant no more."

His offered hand Major Sedley readily accepted, and, with engaging warmth, thanked him for his kindness; and then, going up to

Sidney and Anna, apologized for the impropriety into which he had been hurried.

Anna, with carelessness, and Sidney, with emotion, though both with politeness, accepted his apology.

The remainder of the day Major Sedley and Captain Elmore, at Charles's request, spent at Belle Vue, and during the whole evening Charles behaved to the Major with a degree of studied though friendly politeness he had never before shewn him, as if anxious to eradicate every impression of his late conduct from the mind of the latter.

Major Sedley seemed pleased by his attention, and grateful for his kindness; and whether from that circumstance, or from being more on his guard, appeared to have totally recovered from the dejection he had betrayed in the morning, and was easy and animated. Captain Elmore was even more solicitous to display his usual happy frankness.

To Sidney, however, though pointedly polite, they were both very far from treating in their former manner, and she even thought she perceived that the effort to disguise their

feelings was, if possible, more painful than ever; and this idea induced her sedulously to endeavour to conquer the sort of softened feeling which Charles's conduct and his own had given her towards Sedley.

CHAP. II.

Sidney's time was now much occupied in parties at home and abroad; where she, as usual, met Major Sedley; but, on every occasion, his conduct towards her was the same. He appeared, indeed, more anxious than he had at first been to prevent the change in his sentiments from becoming obvious, and behaved in such a way that none but those who had narrowly watched him could have discerned the alteration, but he was as remote as ever from any wish to enter even indirectly into any allusion as to what had produced the change. Sidney proudly followed his example, and soon lost all wish to develop what she every day felt less anxiety to know; as the resentment she felt at his indifference totally extinguished her curiosity and still lingering confidence that his conduct had not been designedly base.

Mr. French, whose knowledge of Sedley's admiration of Sidney had induced him to be a very attentive observer of the change in his manner towards her, was well inclined to take advantage of the unintentional levity into which agitation had betrayed her, to commence a sort of unmeaning flirtation with her; but Sidney, now restored to her usual calmness and steady propriety, so decidedly, though gently, repulsed his advances, that he soon resumed his former polite indifference; though he sometimes indulged himself in indirect expressions of surprise how Sedley had forfeited her favour.

Charles behaved to her with even more than his wonted kindness and attention, and appeared uneasy at observing her seem rather ill, or out of spirits; but never, directly or indirectly, alluded to Sedley. And, though Sidney could not forbear wondering, she rejoiced at the part he acted.

More than a fortnight had thus elapsed when, one day that the Montague family were invited to a large dinner party at Mr. Radcliffe's, Mr. Montague informed his lady he

could not accompany her, as he and Charles were obliged to stay at home to transact business of consequence, and to sign several leases he had made on coming of age. And as all the parties had agreed to come, and that his agent was to meet them on that day, he could not possibly leave home.

On receiving this intelligence, Mrs. Montague, who knew that her husband had a decided aversion to pass a single day in his own house without some female member of his family, told Anna she must stay at home with her father and brother. Sidney, who knew that she would feel peculiarly disappointed in not going to Mr. Radcliffe's, as she had a great partiality for the whole family, begged to remain in her place; to which Mrs. Montague made no opposition, and Anna gratefully assented.

At the usual hour, therefore, Mrs. Montague, Miss Watkins, and the two Miss Montagues, set out for Mr. Radcliffe's; and Sidney dined with Mr. Montague and Charles.

Soon after the cloth was removed she retired to the drawing-room; and, taking a

seat on the sofa, set about finishing a dress she was making for a large ball, to which she was invited on the following week.

The silence that prevailed around her insensibly depressed her spirits; and, notwithstanding every effort to banish the subject from her thoughts, Sedley alone occupied her attention. The spot where she was at the moment sitting recalling a remembrance of the day he had been so dangerously wounded, all her former surprise revived at what could have produced such a change, not only in his manner, but even in his character, as he had on that occasion acted with a degree of tenderness and delicacy that could little have prepared her for what had since followed. Nor had Captain Elmore's behaviour on that occasion been such as to warrant a belief that he would have so fully adopted the unjust resentment, and supported the improper conduct, of his friend; and to this recollection succeeded the still more depressing one, of how palpably she had at that time betrayed her feelings to Captain Elmore.

From this train of mortifying reflections

she was suddenly roused by hearing some person enter the room; and, raising her head, with equal surprise and agitation she beheld Major Sedley.

Advancing with all his wonted cold politeness, he begged pardon for the intrusion, saying he understood all the family, except Mr. Montague and his son, had dined abroad.

Sidney, calmed by his manner, replied by stating the reason of her not joining them; and the Major, taking a seat, began a conversation, though the effort appeared evidently painful to him, and was still more disagreeable to Sidney, who, in spite of her utmost exertions, several times felt her voice falter, from mingled sensations of anger at his manner, and chagrin at his unwelcome intrusion.

In a little time a servant entering told Major Sedley that young Mr. Montague was prevented by indispensable business from attending him for the present; but requested he would have the goodness to wait tea, when his master would have the pleasure of seeing him.

On receiving this message, Sedley hesitated

for a moment, as if debating what answer to return; then desired the servant to say he would with pleasure wait till Mr. C. Montague was at leisure, as he particularly wished to speak to him.

Thus unavoidably compelled to spend some time alone with Sidney, he seemed to think it incumbent on him to appear as if he felt no reluctance to do so, and again renewed the conversation by asking her opinion of some new books he had lately seen at Belle Vue.

Sidney, as anxious to disguise her feelings as he could possibly be to conceal his, forced herself to converse on the subject he had thus introduced with tolerable ease.

The Major speaking of a poem, lately published, which he said he thought she would feel pleasure in reading, she took up her pocket-book, to write down the address of the bookseller from whom she would be most likely to procure it; and, holding the pocket-book carelessly while thus employed, a picture fell from it, and rolled over towards Sedley's feet.

He immediately picked it up; but, as he

was presenting it to Sidney, his colour changed to a livid paleness; and his hand shook with such violent and uncontrollable emotion, that Sidney, surprised out of all caution and reserve, eagerly demanded if he was ill; or what had thus affected him.

"That question might have been spared," returned he, in a voice that evinced he could no longer command his passions; "however weakly I have acted, there was no necessity unnecessarily to wound the feelings of a man, you have so cruelly and wantonly injured."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Sidney, clasping her hands, in a sudden transport of surprise and indignation, "what do you mean? How, Major Sedley, do you presume to address such language to me? If," continued she, while the flush of resentment and pride crimsoned her cheek, "it is for the purpose of extenuating your own conduct, the attempt is superfluous; I have long since ceased to view it with any other feeling than the contempt to which it is so deservedly entitled."

"In what instance," demanded Sedley, in a voice of suffocated emotion, "has my

conduct deserved such censure? how have I acted incompatibly with the sentiments and professions I have ever uttered?"

"In no way, Sir," cried Sidney, haughtily, "that I feel the slightest inclination to point out or see altered; but, after what has passed, you will excuse me from again thinking myself called on, from politeness, or any other motive, to converse with you except in public."

She was then leaving the room, when Sedley, following her, exclaimed, with a degree of vehemence and agitation that irresistibly commanded her attention, and arrested her steps, "To attempt any farther disguise of my feelings is impossible, and, after what has passed, would be improper. If I can have been deceived into acting dishonorably;—"then, after a moment's pause, he added, "a desire to rescue my character from your avowed contempt must supersede every other consideration. But suffer me first to ask one question: I claim no other right to do so than the imperative anxiety I feel to vindicate my honour from the imputation you have cast on it."

"Such an attempt, Sir," replied Sidney

coldly, " will merely give unnecessary trouble, nor do I think myself obliged to answer your questions; but to convince you, sir, that I have no desire to avoid the inquiry, and no motive to conceal any part of my conduct, I will explicitly reply to any demand you may conceive it incumbent on you to make."

Feelings, too powerful either to repress or subdue, for some moments rendered Major Sedley incapable of making the purposed inquiry; and Sidney, to whom Fanny occurred in the momentary pause that succeeded, returned to her seat, determined to await, with as much composure as she could assume, the explanation of what had so long bewildered her, and which had seemed so little likely ever to be unravelled; though, at the instant, she felt no other sensation than a proud resolution of refuting any calumny that had been attached to her character.

The Major, at length approaching, took a seat next her, and, in a voice of violent though subdued emotion, said, " Painfully as your present conduct convinces me that no explanation can now restore me to happiness, it is

a duty I feel equally due to you and to myself to demand one; I must, therefore, ask the question you have declared your willingness to answer: it is, simply, if you are not contracted to the gentleman, whose picture I this moment returned into your possession."

Not all Sidney's efforts at composure had prepared her for such a demand; and, looking at the Major, with a countenance varying every moment from pale to crimson, she replied, "Can you indeed be so lost to every feeling of honour and propriety as to make such a demand, or insult me by such a question?"

"Your answer is sufficient," replied he; "I have nothing more to ask, nor will attempt any vindication of conduct you have so unequivocally shewn was just."

"Very just," returned Sidney, repeating his words with phrensied quickness, "to ask such a question, when the picture you returned you must have known was that of my deceased father;" then, raising her eyes to heaven with an expression of wild anguish, added "Oh, blessed spirit! if at this moment you are sensible of aught passing here, what must be your feeling?"

"Your father!" exclaimed Sedley, with a convulsive start; "did you indeed say your father?"

Sidney made no reply; she would have instantly quitted the room, had she been able; but, feeling her head grow giddy, she put her hand to her forehead, and remained quiet.

Some time elapsed before Sedley himself was capable of speaking, but he at length said, in a voice of calm despair, "To offer any justification of my conduct, I am at this moment unable to attempt; deceived and betrayed into insults the most unpardonable to a woman, whose affection and esteem I prized beyond existence, and sunk in her eyes into an object of the most deserved contempt, such an effort would be as painful as it would be superfluous.—The day may perhaps arrive when you will be convinced how innocently I have fallen the sacrifice of treachery and cruelty, for which no atonement can be offered, no reparation made."

The tone of the Major's voice irresistibly attracted Sidney's attention; the death-like paleness of his countenance fixed it; and overpowered by both, and by the purport of his

words, her over-wrought feelings at length subsided in tears, which so wholly overcame his fortitude, that, rising from his seat, he paced the room with disordered steps.

Sidney at length, conquering her agitation, and feeling all her tenderness revive at witnessing the expression of his countenance, exclaimed in a tone of the gentlest sweetness, "For unintended insult I can surely feel no resentment; and if you will only explain how or in what way you have been betrayed into the conduct you deplore, to the place you once held in my esteem and confidence you shall be restored, if such is your wish."

In vain did Sedley endeavour to express his feelings at hearing a declaration he had so little expected, and apparently so little deserved; but emotion he could not restrain bore testimony to the impression it made on his heart.

Sidney, excessively affected at witnessing a degree of distress the manly spirit of his character convinced her no common feelings could have excited, and that no strength of affection she had ever believed he felt for her could have produced, was extremely desirous

to sooth and compose him, and at length said with a faint smile, that, however well assured of the truth of his assertions, he must make some allowance for her curiosity in wishing to learn who had so grossly imposed on his confidence.

At the mention of the deception that had been practised, Sedley's eye flashed; and his cheek flushed with resentment as he replied, "To the generous pardon you have accorded for conduct which by myself can never be forgiven, add the still farther obligation, for a little time longer to suspend your present inquiry. My injured honour must be vindicated, my insulted feelings must be satisfied, before I can reply to your question; but I will then produce the most unequivocal proof, that, however credulous I have been, I have been nothing more. That you do not require such a proof of my veracity gratifies and delights me beyond the power of expression; but to you,-to myself, I feel such atonement due, and such shall be paid."

Alarmed at the prospect of the scene that must ensue if he publicly charged Fanny with

her conduct, Sidney exclaimed, with great energy, "Tell me, Major Sedley, explicitly tell me, if it was by a member of my own family that you have been led into error?"

To this question Sedley hesitated to reply, till Sidney, expressing herself seriously offended at his silence, he said, with some emotion, "It was; none other would I one moment have credited: but do not forbid my resenting it; I should consider myself as for ever disgraced in your eyes and my own, if I could pass it over in silence."

"And how," cried Sidney, "would exposing me to my aunt's resentment, to my uncle's, and perhaps to Charles's, who, whatever his affection to me may be, would feel himself disgraced by such a discovery, tend to sooth your feelings? Dislike to me has prompted the conduct that I despise too much to resent."

"How strangely inexplicable are your words," cried Sedley, thrown off his guard, "when in the same moment you say you are at once the object of his affection and dislike."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Sidney, aghast; "you surely cannot mean Charles?"

The Major made no reply, but endeavoured to change the subject; when Sidney, convinced by his unwillingness to mention the name, and by the words he had incautiously uttered, that Charles must have been the person who had deceived him, though he who had never occurred to her, and certain, from his manner, that he intended to call him to a severe account for his conduct,—an account that might not only deprive her of a beloved relation, but must for ever preclude a possibility of their union,—interrupted him, and said with great energy, "Your manner, your words, convince me that Charles was the person who, probably to answer some purpose of amusement, thoughtlessly led you into error. The atonement you intend to require I now perceive, and most solemnly assure you, that if you do not pledge your honour to give up every intention of the kind, our intercourse is from this moment ended; for never could I so ill repay all his and my uncle's kindness as to consider as my friend the person who could so decidedly

view him as an enemy. His conduct has surprised me; but a thousand circumstances I cannot now repeat convince me it was a mere thoughtless frolic."

A conviction of the consequences that must follow such a step now for the first time obtruded itself on Sedley's mind, and he replied, "To sacrifice any resentment I could feel to your wishes would be the least return I could make for the generous, the undeserved, kindness of your conduct, and such as I should, after a little reflection, have voluntarily offered, even had no other motive influenced me; but not even this trivial proof of my gratitude can I now shew; selfish feelings and considerations as powerfully call on me to subdue my resentment as any attention to your wishes could exact; but, since the only obstacle is removed that could have prevented me from entering into a full explanation of my conduct, will you listen to a recital, that, though I fear it will give you very just reason to doubt my understanding, will at least acquit me of dishonour."

Sidney replied by expressing her wish to

hear such an explanation. He thus continued: "You must surely recollect that day when I surprised you in a state of agitation which overpowered every other feeling except that of ardently wishing to sooth your uneasiness; this led me to make inquiries which you did not consider it either proper or prudent to answer, and, therefore, hastily left me: my eyes then accidentally rested on a picture I had seen you throw precipitately from you on my entrance, and, with emotions, which I cannot attempt to describe, I perceived it was that of a very young man dressed in regimentals. On taking it up, I observed the glass still wet with the tears you had shed over it. Your father, I knew, had been a clergyman, and that you had no brother, nor had I ever heard of your having any near connexion in the army: do not then wonder that I was surprised, that I felt the poison of jealousy strike cold through my heart, when I remembered your recent sorrow, and recollected too how decidedly you had refused me any explanation of the feelings that oppressed you."

Sedley here paused; he could not say that

he felt a doubt still linger in his mind of the truth of Sidney's assertion, that the picture was her father's; yet he ardently sighed for the explanation of circumstances that still oppressed him with a nameless, an indefinable dread, and this he wished to imply, rather than explicitly to avow it.

Sidney understanding his feelings, and nearly as desirous of giving the explanation he so evidently required as he was of hearing it, frankly replied, "Circumstances seemingly so mysterious are readily accounted for: my father, when a very young man, held a commission in the volunteers, and this picture was then, at my grandmother's request, drawn in that uniform, and, as I possessed no other, I valued it in proportion to the deserved affection I felt for him. Why I refused any answer to your inquiries I cannot so readily say; as the same motives of propriety, that at the moment withheld my confidence, must still enforce my silence."

"I ask, I require nothing more," cried the Major, in an accent of delight; "you have more than satisfied, you have enchanted me,

by an explanation which I was conscious of not deserving and feared to solicit. I will now continue my narration with a candour, that, let it make what other impression it may on your mind, will, I trust, acquit me of duplicity. I was still gazing on the picture, when Montague entered the room, and, coming over unperceived by me, observed what so deeply engaged my attention; and, as his conduct convinced me, as readily penetrated into those feelings, which I fear my countenance but too forcibly expressed, for he instantly asked me how I approved of Sidney's taste in an admirer. Scarcely able to reply to a question that so cruelly confirmed all my floating, half-formed suspicions, I faintly answered, that he was handsome; then, anxious to gain still farther information, I inquired, might I venture to ask his name, as I had never understood you were under any engagement. He said he supposed not, as it was a profound secret; for, as the young man's father had opposed the union, he had gone abroad in a fit of desperation; but you had vowed eternal constancy, and were not likely to break your word; and as I was a

particular friend, he would tell me in confidence his name was Montgomery, and concluded by referring me to you for the truth of what he advanced.—A call from one of the servants here obliged him to leave me, saying he would be back in a moment; but, seizing the opportunity his absence afforded, I made my retreat, and set out for C—— in a state of mind no language can describe. Unable, in any degree, to calm my feelings, or even to reflect distinctly on what I had heard, I felt no other wish than to escape Elmore's inquiries, till I could at least reply to them with consistency, and for this purpose instantly accepted an invitation French gave me, to accompany him to his father's. When, at length left alone, and allowed in the silence of night to reflect without interruption, all I had heard, all I had observed, passed in review before me, and Fancy, ever ready to aid our mental deception, by painting every object in hues of its own colouring, assisted to plunge me still farther into error. I retraced every incident that had occurred since our first acquaintance, and

with perverse assiduity selected all that could concur to torture me, by a confirmation of what rankled like a dagger in my heart. You may, possibly, forget a circumstance I but too well remembered at that moment,—the situation in which I accidentally surprised you, the day of the yeomanry inspection. The sorrow I had then with pain imputed to some domestic source of dissatisfaction, I now attributed to newly-awakened regret for one, whom the scene and many local circumstances might have recalled to your recollection; and your refusal to satisfy inquiries, tenderness alone had prompted, forbad me any longer to doubt the truth of an assertion I had no reason to discredit; for, well as I thought I knew Montague, of such deliberate treachery I could not have suspected him; and, with an ingenuity as perversely cruel as his own, ascribed his conduct to kind motives; imputing it to a wish of preserving me from bestowing my affections on one whose heart was unalterably engaged to another. And though the warning came too late to save my peace, I yet felt a

proud gratification that it had come time enough to save me from being an object of derision."

"How," cried Sidney, reproachfully, "could you, after having so long known me, form an opinion so injurious to my principles and character, as to suppose I would, if under any engagement, act as if perfectly free? Or how could you suppose me so base as to sport with your feelings?"

"The candour to which you are so well entitled you shall meet; and though it may, perhaps, excite your resentment, and sink me very low in your estimation, I will yet explicitly acknowledge all. On my first entering the army, then not quite of age, the regiment was ordered to Dublin, where I became acquainted with a family well known in the fashionable world for sacrificing every sentiment of inclination and affection to interest; and not very scrupulous, though certainly very guarded, in their manner of securing advantageous connexions. Of their principles and characters I was immediately informed by my brother officers; and sometimes

seriously, sometimes jestingly, warned to be more circumspect in my conduct and keep aloof from their family parties, unless I chose to become the victim of their purposes; Elmore, with earnest warmth, seconding their advice. Deaf to this wise admonition, and not considering myself vulnerable to arts I despised, with all the fearless confidence of my age I laughed at the threatened danger; and, though far from seeking the intimacy, I did not avoid it, feeling anxious to convince Elmore, and all my brother officers, that, if not as well versed in the artifices of the world as they were, I was yet equally capable of protecting myself against them. The consequence was such as you may naturally suppose, when consummate art was exposed to my raw inexperience and silly confidence in myself. Deceived by the appearance of all that could charm my senses and interest my feelings, my vanity flattered by a display of sensibility I was led to believe I had awakened in the bosom of a young lady, whose beauty, grace, and manner, were calculated to inspire admiration, and whose part was studied with a degree

of assiduity worthy of a better cause, I was rapidly becoming the dupe of her dissimulation and my own vanity. Insensible to Elmore's advice, which I considered as the mere effect of prejudice, I should in a little time have surrendered my affections wholly to her disposal, though my imagination was more dazzled than my heart was affected, when I was happily saved from consigning myself to the misery such a connexion would have entailed on me by Elmore's active friendship. He apprized Colonel Coote of the situation of my affairs, who, with a degree of kindness I shall ever remember with the sincerest gratitude, but without entering into any unnecessary explanation, gave the young lady's mother to understand, without seeming to design it, the real state of my fortune, which, not being exactly what she had been taught to believe, immediately determined her what part to act; and the first news I heard on my return from the country, whither I had gone on business, was, that the young lady I had been led to think viewed me with such partial eyes was publicly affianced to a gen-

tleman I had known to be my rival. Of him I had always heard her speak with all the dislike her gentle nature appeared capable of feeling, but his fortune was infinitely superior to what mine had been so late discovered to be. This information was confirmed, on the evening I received it, by her mother, who with unblushing ease assured me it had been a very long attachment. Resentment I for the moment experienced, though even then aware that my vanity alone had received any wound. You may now, perhaps, ask me, if so, for what purpose I have mentioned the circumstance?—For the simple one of convincing you of my sincerity, and accounting for my late conduct; for, however delighted at my escape, the warning was not to be forgotten, and it has impressed my mind with a diffidence in my capability of exciting any genuine sentiments of affection, as weak, perhaps, as was my former ill-judged confidence in my power of guarding against art and hypocrisy. Do not then wonder, or feel offended, that, with a mind thus poisoned by jealousy and suspicion, I too readily con-

founded characters so opposite; and, in so doing, concluded that I was only profiting by the experience I had acquired. Yet, to be equally candid, before the period when I became the dupe of Montague's cruel and unfeeling levity, I did believe that I had created some interest in your heart; and had I not been checked by a lingering fear that I might have mistaken general affability of manner for partiality in my favour, I should have avowed my feelings. The time I was wounded," continued he, colouring very high, "still farther confirmed me in the belief; and as I then acknowledged my sentiments to Elmore, and as he flattered the fond hopes I begun to cherish, I should, on my recovery, have thrown off all disguise, had not an observation of your alarmed delicacy, on our first meeting, withheld me, and determined me, by no rash precipitation, to run any chance of forfeiting your esteem. Thus was I situated when I fell into an error, which I shall never cease to lament. Yet, still clinging to any thing like a hope, I did not give up all as lost; and though I could not so far command

my feelings as to attempt any disguise of the resentment I experienced, and even to myself denied that I indulged the slightest expectation of being undeceived, I could not forbear watching you every moment, till that unfortunate evening you sung a song, which I believed you had selected for the purpose of insulting me, by a display of the motives that had guided your conduct. Though your fainting surprised me, I was not undeceived, as your manner to French confirmed me in my new error; and from that time, until the present evening, all my thoughts and wishes have been invariably directed to trample on my feelings, and to disguise the anguish that preyed on my heart. The inattention of every member of your family to the alteration in my manner convinced me they had never thought it worthy of observation, from knowing your affections had been engaged. How far all I have now avowed will plead my apology to you for injustice, which every circumstance seemed cruelly combined to render more flagrant, and at the same time more unsuspected, I know not; but I will not again so far injure you as to

doubt your relieving me from the torturing anxiety I feel by a candid avowal of your sentiments."

Sidney listened to this frank confession of the feelings and motives that had governed Sedley's conduct with sensations of confusion, wonder, and pleasure; and, taught to allow for his injustice by a recollection of her own suspicions of his honour, when equally with himself deceived by false appearances, she told him, with a smile, she could neither question his understanding or honour, without also implicating her own, as she had followed his example in as hastily believing him guilty of treachery and duplicity: they must only, therefore, mutually consign the past to oblivion.

Enchanted by a manner and declaration which convinced Sedley that whatever influence he had acquired over her heart still remained unimpaired, he, with revived spirits and impassioned tenderness, requested her to say if he had been as little deceived in hoping to meet her sympathy and approbation of his sentiments as in every other opinion he had

formed of her, when left to the guidance of his own judgment?

As far superior to trifling with any man's feelings as she was to artfully endeavouring to attract attention, she with frank, though blushing grace, assured him he had not.

Every pang Sedley had endured (and how bitter they were he had not sought to disguise) was now recompensed; and in his rapture, which seemed too fervent and heartfelt to evaporate in common expressions of pleasure, Sidney, with a heart and manner as candid as his own, did not seek to disguise that she almost participated.

Sedley at length, as if suddenly recollecting himself, exclaimed, " Before I make any application to Mr. Montague, I must first arrange my affairs, which, until my uncle Sedley's return from England, whither business has again called him, I cannot do. He informed me, in his last letter, that he would return in about a fortnight: will you, till then, suffer me to decline entering on the subject with Mr. Montague, and forbear to mention what has occurred this evening? It is also

right to tell you, that, during my father's life-time, I cannot expect more than a moderate addition to my pay, as my father," added he, colouring, "requires nearly his whole fortune to support the style of life he has adopted."

"My answer," replied Sidney, a little alarmed at this speech, "will be guided by yours to two questions I must ask you: one is, Whether you know the present state of my fortune? The other is, Do you dread your father's opposition to your wishes?"

"To both I will answer as explicitly as they are stated. With the situation of your fortune I have been acquainted ever since my first coming to the country; and farther than as a matter of justice, and from regard to your feelings, it would give me pleasure to see it restored to the lawful owner, I am indifferent on the subject. To your second question I declare, on my honour, as a gentleman, I have not the slightest apprehension of even a wish on my father's part to oppose or interfere with me; and my reason for desiring my uncle's presence is, that, without his assistance, I could not settle matters of property in

the way I know Mr. Montague must require; and that he may not feel offended by not having such an arrangement made previous to any application to him is my only motive for wishing even an hour's delay; but, if to you it is disagreeable, I will speak to him this evening. Will you now give me your opinion of the statement I have made, as with your sentiments I must be acquainted previous to my application to him?"

"After your reply," cried Sidney, smiling, "I almost feel offended at your requiring my opinion. I will, however, answer in your own words, 'I am indifferent on the subject;' or rather, I am anxious to convince you, that all women are not exactly alike in their sentiments: a fortnight's delay, or a month's, if you desire it, can make no difference; and I request you will now change the subject."

Major Sedley immediately complied with her wishes, and informed her, the business that brought him to Belle Vue, which he must ever consider as the most fortunate of his life, was to carry an invitation to young Montague to join Elmore, French, and him-

self, in a visit they proposed to make to Mr. Otwage, one of his relations, for the purpose of shooting grouse. "This party I would now decline," continued he, "could I do so without offending Mr. Otwage, and exciting French's curiosity, as he knows I have accepted the invitation; and such is his quickness of observation, and intolerable levity, that it has required my utmost command of temper, and all my own endeavours to appear unconcerned, in order to avoid a quarrel with him already."

A servant came in to say that his master and young Mr. Montague would join them in a few moments, aad had sent to request that Miss Montague would order tea.

As soon as he was gone, Sidney said eagerly, "You will remember your promise, you will not betray any resentment to Charles?"

"If you will not trust me," replied the Major, smiling, "for consulting your wishes, you may, at least, trust me for consulting my own happiness."

Tea was scarcely ready, when Mr. Montague and Charles entered the room together.

Charles apologized to Sedley for his long delay, saying he had been unavoidably detained by a set of men on business, who had annoyed him most confoundedly by their tedious nonsense.

His apology the Major readily accepted, with truth assuring him he had been very well entertained during his absence, and then gave him the invitation he had mentioned to Sidney; but, in spite of his utmost efforts, his countenance changed as he addressed him; and the resentment, which a sight of Charles had revived, was apparent in his manner, though he politely and repeatedly pressed him to join their party.

Charles, surprised and somewhat offended at Sedley's manner, at first declined the invitation; but, overcome by the urgency of the Major's entreaties, who felt an ardent desire to rid Sidney of one who he feared often cruelly tormented her, he at length consented, and asked the whole party to meet and breakfast at Belle Vue, from whence they might set out on their intended excursion.

This point settled, Sedley paid him little

farther attention, but chiefly addressing his conversation to Mr. Montague and Sidney. Charles, after watching him for some time, rose, and, complaining of being confoundedly fatigued, went over and threw himself on a sofa.

Scarcely had he lain down, when the picture of his uncle, which Sidney had, in her agitation, forgotten to put away, caught his eye; and, taking it up, he called to Sidney, saying he wanted to speak to her.

Sidney complied; when in a low voice, and hurried manner, he asked her if Sedley had seen that picture with her?

"He has," replied she, in much confusion; "but why do you ask?"

"No matter," said he, hastily; "but tell me, Does he know whom it represents?"

"He does," replied she, reproachfully; "but how, Charles, could you practise such conduct?"

"Don't tease me, Sidney," exclaimed he, impatiently, "I can't bear it."

Sidney made no reply, though she could scarcely forbear asking him, how he, who

could so ill endure to be teased himself, should so wantonly torment others.

In a little time Charles, without speaking to any of the party, left the room.

He had been absent about half an hour, when his servant coming into the room gave Sidney a letter, which he told her, in a low voice, his master had forgotten to give her on his return home before dinner; and then said aloud, his master begged Major Sedley would excuse him, but feeling himself extremely fatigued he had retired to bed, as he purposed rising very early in the morning to prepare for their intended excursion.

Sidney, surprised and alarmed at the message and the letter, knew not whether she might venture to read it before her uncle; when Mr. Montague, rising, apologized to Sedley for leaving him for some moments, as he feared Charles was unwell.

The moment he was gone Sidney opened her letter, and, slightly apologizing to the Major, read the following lines:—

"To Miss S. Montague,

"In reply to your question, Sidney, which I

could not answer at the moment, I now tell you, that on seeing my uncle's picture in Sedley's hand, and observing the expression of his countenance, the whim seized me of tormenting him, by still farther rousing the jealousy I saw he felt; and I therefore told him the tale I did, with no other view than that of indulging the frolic of the moment, as I did not purpose to let him remain an hour in ignorance of the falsehood I had invented.

"His sudden departure surprised me; and, on hearing he had gone off with French, I felt sorry lest I should have gone farther than I ought; but, not expecting he would give credit to so ridiculous a story, I did not think much of the matter.

"On the night of the ball I watched him on his first entrance; but, perceiving him go up and address you, I concluded he had, as I expected, given no sort of credit to the story; and never thought more on the subject, till your suddenly fainting, and his suffering French to take care of you, again excited my surprise; and, as you may recollect, I asked you, at your own door, Had any thing occurred

to wound your feelings? Your so instantly answering No, again removed my suspicions; and perceiving, on my return to the drawing-room, the agitation of Sedley's countenance, and seeing him immediately after leave the house, I concluded he had been too much alarmed to give you any assistance, and had gone off to conceal his feelings. In this error I remained till after your return from Mount Enesy, when I too plainly perceived the extent of the mischief I had so thoughtlessly committed.

"To remedy this I studied the best means, as I wished to undeceive Sedley without letting him suspect my intentions; and for that purpose begun to rally him on his abstraction the day, you may recollect, when his so instantly firing at the idea that I meant to insult him, and the violence of his conduct, compelled me in self-defence to retort his vehemence; though, a moment's reflection sufficing to convince me he might have justly felt offended, I was more ready than I was willing to allow to make the apology Elmore proposed; and, even had Sedley declined the reconciliation,

and called on me in any other way, I never would have been such a rascal as to have returned his fire; and this, at the moment, was my decided resolution, though anger at his threats determined me to disguise the concern I felt for having provoked them.

"From seriously setting about undeceiving Sedley I was withheld by pride. I could not endure to let him, or any man, suppose that you, that I, or one of my family, felt the least concern on the subject, or would take pains to induce any man to go farther than he thought proper; and no sorrow I felt could have compelled me to such meanness.—I have now stated all: to say how much I have lamented my thoughtless conduct, and that it has given me a lesson I shall not hastily forget, is superfluous. When you can, forgive me; but, if you still bear me any affection, or if you value that which I most sincerely feel for you, never again ask me a question on this subject, nor allude to it more.—Thus much I felt myself called on to say, but never will I hereafter open my lips respecting it.

"If such an explanation has taken place

between you and Sedley as authorises your taking such a step, if you choose it shew him what I have written, and let him in that case consider it as equally addressed to himself, and the continuance of my friendship offered to him on the same terms. He has a right to feel angry, I allow, but that, I cannot now help. If he can conquer his resentment, let us meet to-morrow at breakfast as if nothing of the kind had ever occurred.—If he does not wish this, I have no objection; I shall not prescribe the conduct he ought to pursue.

"C. M."

When Sidney had read this letter, which obliterated every sentiment of anger that she had been inclined to harbour against Charles, she put it into Major Sedley's hand, hoping it might have the same effect on him; nor was she deceived in her expectations, as he had scarcely concluded it when he said, with some emotion, "There is a something in Montague's disposition so generous, so feeling, so eccentrically good, that, no matter what pain he inflicts, or what injury he thoughtlessly com-

mits, it is impossible to indulge resentment towards him. Two hours since, no human eloquence could have persuaded me that I could ever again, in my heart, consider him as a friend, or have forgotten the injury he had done me; and yet at this moment I feel anxious to convince *him* how sincerely I forgive him, and will implicitly yield to the terms he prescribes, and never, either directly or indirectly, allude to the subject in his presence. Nor have I, after all," cried he, fervently pressing Sidney's hand, "much merit in this; for, in recompense for the torture he made me feel, he has been the means of my, this evening, enjoying a degree of rapture I might never otherwise have experienced, by convincing me, beyond any possibility of jealous doubt, that I have been so blessed as to secure the heart of one, whose character, conduct, and disposition, have more than realized every idea of earthly perfection my youthful fancy ever formed; such an one as I never expected to meet, and to render whose future life happy every thought and wish of mine shall be invariably directed."

To this warm effusion Sidney was prevented from replying by the return of her uncle, who declared he had had the pleasure of finding Charles perfectly well, though so much fatigued he had declined returning to the drawing-room any more that night.

Neither Sidney nor the Major could forbear smiling from the conviction that fatigue was not exactly the motive that influenced Charles's refusal, though they mutually expressed their pleasure at hearing he was perfectly free from indisposition.

Mr. Montague, surprised at a degree of gaiety which Sedley had not for several weeks displayed, with affectionate cordiality congratulated him on the recovery of his spirits; saying he had been much concerned at observing his late dejection, though politeness had restrained him from expressing his feelings.

Sedley was extremely confused at this speech, but with grateful warmth thanked him for his kindness, declaring how happy he felt in having become acquainted with a family who had collectively and individually treated him

with friendly and uniform regard; adding that he had that evening received intelligence that had totally removed the depression of his spirits.

Mr. Montague, feeling lonely in the absence of his family, and particularly so from being left by Charles, asked the Major to prolong his stay; he required no second invitation, and felt so reluctant to depart, that, on finding Mrs. Montague intended to come home early, he made no move to take leave until after her return, when he at length rose to retire.

Anna, exceedingly surprised at meeting Sedley with Sidney and her father, accompanied her to her room, to inquire what new miracle had occurred to produce such a change; when Sidney, after enjoining her to silence, related all that had taken place.

Anna, grateful for her unremitting kindness, and anxious to have all around her happy, and contributing to her own amusement, expressed the most unbounded pleasure at this intelligence; mingled indeed with no small share of wonder at Charles's singular freak, as she termed it; but, feeling excessively fatigued by

the constant round of dissipation in which she had latterly passed her time, she soon retired, leaving Sidney to the enjoyment of a degree of happiness that more than recompensed her for every sorrow she had yet endured. With grateful devotion she offered her thanks to Heaven for the prospect of such felicity as she had never ventured to hope for in an union with Sedley, who, to use his own language, realized every idea of earthly perfection: to meet with one altogether untainted with the frailties of humanity, or to whose situation, fortune, or disposition, nothing could be objected by the most fastidious, she had never been so weak or so romantic as to expect.

CHAP. III.

CHARLES did not make his appearance the next morning till after Major Sedley, Captain Elmore, and Mr. French, who all came early to breakfast, had arrived.—The moment he entered the room Sedley went forward, and, holding out his hand, expressed a hope that he had recovered from his fatigue of the preceding evening.

Charles, perceiving by his manner that Sidney had shewn him his letter, blushed excessively: and, so completely did all his usual easy address and presence of mind forsake him, that, though he gave him his hand, he was unable to reply. Sedley, observing his confusion, warmly pressed his hand, and immediately turned away.

Charles was inexpressibly mortified at having so palpably betrayed his feelings, and ashamed of the part he had acted, as well,

as of the concessions into which a sense of propriety had urged him, he endeavoured to assume the most extravagant mirth, in order to baffle observation, and made up in noise for the want of his usual gaiety. As every whim of this sort was received with perfect good humour by Mr. and Mrs Montague, it passed off without any remark. To Sidney, however, he neither uttered a word nor directed a look; nor was she more inclined for any sort of intercourse between them; she dreaded the raillery of his eye, if not of his words, and felt equal confusion with himself from perceiving the striking change in Captain Elmore's manner: respectful and attentive beyond what it had ever been, his looks and gestures seeming to convey, without the aid of words, an apology for his late conduct, and which delicacy alone restrained him from offering.

As the vehicles in which the young men were to travel had been ordered at an early hour, the moment breakfast was over they rose to depart; and Charles, staying after the rest of his companions to take leave of his mother,

who would have felt hurt at the omission of that ceremony, even for the shortest absence, affectionately embraced her, and then went up to where Sidney and Anna were standing together. He hastily shook hands with both, saying to Sidney, in a hurried manner, "I will never forget the part you have acted," and instantly darted out of the room. Mrs. Montague remarked with a smile that Charles appeared in the most extravagant spirits at the prospect of the amusement he was going to enjoy, and that she felt extremely obliged to Major Sedley for proposing a party in which he seemed to take so much pleasure.

Neither Sidney nor Anna could forbear smiling at Mrs. Montague's mistake; but, without making any reply, they went out to walk. They conversed without interruption, on Sidney's future prospects; and, the longer she dwelt on them, the greater was the pleasure they afforded. She contemplated with additional delight, the material change it would produce in her situation, which, notwithstanding her own gentleness and fortitude, her uncle's kindness, the affection of Charles, and Anna's

good nature, many circumstances had concurred to render very oppressive to her feelings.

Soon after their return to the house, as all the female part of the family were sitting in the drawing-room, a servant announced Mrs. Hervey; she suddenly advanced into the room, approached Mrs. Montague, who was standing to receive her; and, clasping her hands with a look of great agitation, exclaimed, "Oh Mrs. Montague, what shall I do? you can't think what has happened to me!"

Mrs. Montague, surprised by her agitation, with kindness and politeness requested that she would calm her spirits, and then explain what terrible occurrence had been the cause of so much distress.

"Oh, it is no wonder that I am distressed, distracted," cried Mrs. Hervey; "Eliza Flowerdale has eloped; she went off last night with that puppy, Elverton; and I am come here for the purpose of asking your's and my good friend Mr. Montague's advice as to what I ought to do."

Astonished by this intelligence, Mrs. Montague was for a moment unable to devise what

answer to give; but, quickly recovering her presence of mind, with all her wonted graciousness she offered her condolements, and expressed a hope that Miss Flowerdale might have no reason to repent the hasty step she had been induced to take.

No motives of politeness were sufficiently powerful to restrain Fanny's and Anna's astonishment at this intelligence: involuntarily diverted by it, and by Mrs. Hervey's manner, they could with difficulty restrain their ill-concealed laughter. Sidney felt all inclination to smile at Mrs. Hervey's folly, repressed by pity for her sufferings; while Miss Watkins, drawing herself up with a look of stately gravity, expressed her horror at the base return Miss Flowerdale had made to her aunt's care and tenderness.

"A base one indeed, you may well say, Miss Watkins," exclaimed Mrs. Hervey, "to treat me in such a manner; to disgrace herself for ever to throw herself away on a fellow without any fortune, and one that I particularly charged her not to think of.

She that might have married so well! a girl of her beauty and fortune to act such a part!"

Mrs. Montague, recollecting that Mrs. Harvey had expressed a wish to consult with Mr. Montague, told Anna to go and search for her father, not choosing to summon a servant into the room in the present situation of Mrs. Hervey's mind.

Mr. Montague, happening to be in the house, accompanied Anna to the drawing-room, and, having been prepared by her for the intelligence he was to receive, he went forward to Mrs. Hervey, and with friendly warmth expressed his sorrow for the disagreeable event that had taken place in her family, offering his services in any way in which they could be useful to her.

Mrs. Hervey thanked him, and then continued: "I have come here, my dear friend, to ask your advice what I ought to do; whether I ought to follow Eliza, and endeavour to bring her back, or whether I ought to allow her to meet the punishment she so well deserves in

throwing herself away on such a man,—one who has neither rank, property, nor any thing else, to recommend him."

"Has Miss Flowerdale informed you where she intended to go?" said Mr. Montague, "or is there any chance of your overtaking her before she is married?"

"I am sure I don't know where she is gone," replied Mrs. Hervey, who had never reflected on the necessity there was for such information to direct her search; "she never gave me the least hint of the matter; and all I know about it is from the letter she left on her dressing-table; in which she says, that finding it necessary to her happiness, she had determined to marry Elverton; and, knowing that I did not like such a connexion, to prevent any unnecessary disagreement, she had resolved to marry him privately, and would write to me when the ceremony was performed. As her own maid went off with her, I know not who to ask by which road she has gone; for all the other servants declare they know nothing of the matter; and it is very probable they do not."

"Under such circumstances," cried Mr. Montague, "and after so many hours have elapsed, I fear your undertaking such a pursuit would be equally fruitless and disagreeable. Mr. Elverton, you may rest assured, has taken such measures, that it is not improbable they may be even now far beyond your reach, even if you knew what direction they had taken."

"What am I to do then?" exclaimed Mrs. Hervey, clasping her hands: "am I to suffer that Elverton to make what settlement he pleases of Eliza's fortune; or perhaps none at all; and that without a penny of his own?"

"Is Miss Flowerdale of age?" said Mr. Montague, "for on that circumstance the future settlement of her fortune must now in a great measure depend, unless it has been already settled by her father's will."

"She is of age," cried Mrs. Hervey. "I did not think there was any necessity for speaking of it; because no person, you know, likes to speak of girls' ages till after they are married; nor did Eliza herself wish it known. And, as to her fortune, it is entirely in her

own power, as my brother died without making a will."

"I am sorry, extremely sorry, to hear it," said Mr. Montague; "and the best and only advice I can, in the present state of your affairs, offer, is immediately to apply to any of Miss Flowerdale's nearest male relations, whom you think most proper to be intrusted with such a commission; and, as soon as her route can be traced, endeavour if possible, with their assistance, to induce Mr. Elverton to make a proper and honourable settlement of the property, over which he will then have acquired too full a power."

"He is a base designing fellow," cried Mrs. Hervey; "and, if I could have thought he had such a plan in view, I never would have allowed him to enter my house."

"I always thought his attentions to Miss Flowerdale were very marked," said Miss Watkins; "and I am surprised, Mrs. Hervey, that his conduct could have escaped your observation; for every person else remarked it."

"Yes, so I was told," replied Mrs. Her-

vey, thrown off her guard by her agitation, "but I never believed it possible that Eliza could have seriously thought of him; I always supposed that she was merely flirting. The person that I wished her to marry," continued she, addressing Mr. Montague, "and that I thought she wished herself to marry, was your son."

This singular declaration completely overthrew the gravity of both Fanny and Anna, who laughed almost aloud, nor could Sidney suppress a smile; while Mr. Montague, though amused and surprised, thanked her for the honour she conferred on his son.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Hervey, concluding from his words and manner that such a connexion would have been equally agreeable to him, "is it any wonder I am distracted? Such a young man as your son, such a family, such a fortune, to throw it all away for such a frivolous puppy."

Mr. Montague, not choosing to give Mrs. Hervey to understand that her niece had not at least forfeited a connexion with his son by her late conduct, merely endeavoured to

console her. When Mrs. Hervey had at length exhausted her passion, she quietly agreed to follow the advice he had given her: refusing Mrs. Montague's pressing entreaties to spend the remainder of the day at Belle Vue, and pleading her wish of immediately setting out for Dublin, to consult her friends there, and see what could be done, she took her leave.

"Oh mamma!" exclaimed Fanny, the moment she was gone, "did you ever see such a fool as Mrs. Hervey, to come here to tell papa that she had a design of marrying her niece to Charles?"

"She did not, I suppose, intend to have made such a confession," said Mr. Montague, smiling, "nor should Charles, with my consent, ever have married Miss Flowerdale: she is a girl of no family, no understanding; nothing, in short, but a tolerable fortune to recommend her."

"I should never feel happy again," said Mrs Montague, tenderly, "if my dear Charles was to marry such a girl: but of his acting

so foolishly I have no fears: whenever he does marry, I trust he will choose a wife in every way deserving of him, though I must confess I do not think he will find many such."

"All parents, I believe, think the same," replied Mr. Montague, laughing; "but though," added he more seriously, "I could not suffer Charles to connect himself with any woman whose fortune would not enable him to clear off his incumbrances, I should be very sorry indeed to see my poor boy a sacrifice to mere wealth."

Sidney blushed, on hearing her uncle say this, from a fear that it might be intended as a hint to herself; but a recollection of how soon all his fears on this subject must be for ever removed stifled the uneasiness it would otherwise have given her.

Miss Watkins now uttered the severest sarcasms on both Mrs. Hervey and Miss Flowerdale, in which Fanny warmly concurred, declaring she wondered how any girl could act such a part: but Anna remained silent; for, though she could not forbear laughing at the

folly of Mrs. Hervey, she was too good natured very severely to criticise her absent companions.

About a week after Charles had left home, Mrs. Montague received a letter from him, informing her he should not return for some days, as Sedley had gone to Dublin on particular business, and he had promised to remain at Mr. Otwage's till he came back, when they would all return together.

As Mrs. Montague read this letter aloud, Sidney concluded that Sedley had gone to Dublin for the purpose of meeting his uncle, who might have left England sooner than he had expected; and felt mingled pleasure and confusion in the idea of her present suspense being soon at an end: for, though she indulged no fears, she could not divest herself of anxiety till her uncle's sentiments were fully ascertained, and till it was known whether he would as readily consent to wave any objection to the present limited state of Sedley's fortune as she had herself done.

In a week after the receipt of Charles's letter, his servant arrived at Belle Vue, with

several of his dogs, and a message that his master and the other three gentlemen would return to dinner.

In about two hours after, Charles and his companions entered the drawing-room together; and, though his absence had been so short, his return was hailed with universal pleasure. In the midst of the noise and uproar which he seemed bent on making, Major Sedley had an opportunity of addressing Sidney in a low voice, expressing the rapture he felt at again beholding her.

Sidney, colouring with pleasure at seeing him, and at observing the delight that sparkled in his eyes, had scarcely time to reply, when Charles, running up, and shaking her violently by the hand, exclaimed, "Where the deuce did you hide yourself, Sidney? I have been looking for you this half-hour." Then added, in a lower voice, "But, perhaps, there are better eyes than mine in the room; and, for aught I can tell, you may not altogether relish their observation."

Notwithstanding the low tone in which Charles spoke, Sedley overheard him, and

instantly quitted the spot; when Sidney, with sincere warmth, expressed her pleasure at Charles's return, without taking any notice of his remark.

Charles was highly gratified at observing that his late conduct had in no degree impaired Sidney's affection for him, and having long since recovered from the confusion Sedley's presence had at first excited, he was now really in the extravagant spirits which he had only affected on the morning of his departure, and soon proclaimed, by the gaiety he diffused, the truth of Anna's observation, "that Belle Vue might be said to languish in his absence." And, during the whole time of dinner, the countenances of the servants attending, evinced, that to them also his return was a subject of joy, as the affection they bore him was the genuine offspring of their hearts; and, though mingled with that degree of deference and respectful attention his rank in life commanded, from the highest to the lowest menial in his father's house, he was an universal favourite. His commands were promptly obeyed with zealous and grateful

pleasure, from the certain conviction, that, on every occasion where they required his good offices, they might implicitly rely on his generous exertions.

When the cloth was removed, and the servants withdrawn, Mr. Montague, addressing Major Sedley, asked him if he had heard of Elverton's elopement with Miss Flowerdale.

"I have, sir," replied he. "Colonel Coote mentioned it in a letter which I received from him during my absence; and he told me that Elverton had gone off without apprizing him of his intentions."

"Elverton was no fool," exclaimed Mr. French, laughing: "he knew very well that Colonel Coote would have blown up all his schemes."

"I am confoundedly sorry," cried Charles, who had already learned from Anna all the particulars of Mrs. Hervey's visit, "that I happened to be from home the day poor Mrs. Hervey called to announce the melancholy intelligence; I would certainly have offered my services, and gone in pursuit of the deluded fair one."

"Why would you have done that?" said Mr. French. "Why should you have wished to rob Elverton of so fair, so valuable, a prize?"

"Perhaps you are ignorant that the fair and valuable prize, and her still fairer fortune, were destined for me," replied Charles; "and that Elverton, like a thief, robbed me in my absence. Oh," continued he, uttering a loud groan, "it is a melancholy, a horrid, catastrophe!"

"I don't know that," cried Mr. French, laughing immoderately; "but I think you might have been more on your guard, as Elverton gave very fair warning of his intentions."

"Aye, so he did," replied Charles; "but the misfortune was, that I did not know the good luck designed for me in time. I wonder," continued he, starting up, "would it be too late to follow, and reclaim her?"

"For shame, Charles!" said Mr. Montague, who could not forbear joining in the universal laughter he excited; "how can you talk so lightly on so serious a subject; or speak of Miss Flowerdale, or rather Mrs. Elverton, so indelicately?"

"Mrs. Elverton! that is destruction at once," exclaimed Charles; "so I may sit down quietly under my misfortune; unless, indeed, Miss Flowerdale may be under age, when I can hang Elverton for running away with an heiress, and thus regain my lost ground."

"Charles," said Mr. Montague, "I must request you to wave this subject: it is not a proper one."

"Not a proper one, sir?" returned Charles; "not proper for me to lament such a misfortune? I believe there is not a man in the world would bear to be quietly robbed of his destined wife. The next time you are so disposed, Sidney," continued he, addressing her, "you may sing '*Roy's Wife of Aldavaloch*' for my consolation, as you so prettily designed it for Elverton's edification the last night he was here."

"No, no," said Sidney, in great confusion at the recollections this allusion excited, "I sung it merely to oblige Mr. French; and, had I known for what purpose he requested it, indeed I should have refused."

"I am to thank you, then," cried Mr.

French, bowing, with a dissatisfied air, "for the act, and not for the intention."

"Well, my dear girl!" exclaimed Charles, "sing it for me presently, and I shall thank you for both; and, perhaps, it may console me." Then, seeing his father look displeased at his persisting to speak on the subject, he added, more seriously, "Why, sir, should you suppose that my vanity would render me more discreet than Mrs. Hervey's rendered her? Had she kept her own counsel, so should I; and that for the very best possible reason,—I should have known nothing on the subject. But, come, to shew that I don't bear malice," added he, filling his glass, "I shall drink, Peace and harmony to the new-married pair."

"A very good and necessary toast for the occasion," said Mr. French, following his example.

"As you must know something of Mr. Elverton's character and connexions," said Mr. Montague, addressing Major Sedley, "you can, perhaps, say whether he is a proper match for Miss Flowerdale; for, though his fortune cannot

be any thing equal to hers, from the conduct he thought it necessary to pursue; yet, as her own is a very handsome one, if he is in other respects calculated to render her happy, she may not, perhaps, repent the rash step she has taken quite so much as young ladies in general have reason to do."

"Elverton is the younger branch of a good family, I have always understood," replied Major Sedley; "but of his fortune or connexions I have no personal knowledge. Against his character I have never heard the slightest insinuation; and, as he did not join our regiment till after our return from abroad, a very short time previous to our coming to this country, I cannot say I have any very intimate knowledge even of his disposition; so little more than all the present company, that I have no right to offer an opinion."

"You might not, perhaps, think it fair to give one of a brother officer," cried Charles, "unless it was such a one as you would approve."

"We none of us know any thing to Elverton's disadvantage," said Mr. French,

" except that he is the most indolent peevish fellow I ever met in my life."

The conversation was here interrupted by Mrs. Montague's rising to retire to the drawing-room.

Very early in the evening the ladies were joined by the gentlemen; and, as Mrs. Montague then sat down to cards, Major Sedley, who declined playing, had an opportunity of addressing Sidney. He informed her, in a low voice, that he had gone to Dublin for the purpose of speaking to his lawyer respecting the necessary arrangement of his affairs, and had left a letter with him, to be given to his uncle immediately on his landing, requesting that he would not leave Dublin till he joined him, which he purposed to do as soon as he heard of his arrival, as he had already obtained leave of absence; then putting his picture in her hand, which he told her he had procured while in Dublin, he entreated her to accept it, and in return to give him the small portrait of herself which she had shewn him.

Sidney, though not without blushing, thanked

him for his attention ;' and going for the picture which her father had had drawn for her about a year before, gave it to him without speaking.

Sedley, fervently thanking her for this ready compliance with his wishes, said she had particularly obliged him, by giving it previous to his leaving the country, "as I am most anxious," continued he, "to shew it to my father, and my uncle; the former has always been a most passionate admirer of beauty, and he will, I know, feel peculiar pleasure in observing in this instance, the coincidence of our tastes, though in some other particulars," added he, sighing, "they have not been very sympathetic."

Sidney, though much surprised, asked no explanation of this hint; but replied, with a smile, that it was too late to commence a flatterer.

"So late," cried he, tenderly, though half laughing, "that I shall never make the attempt."

Sidney then asked him if he had yet spoken to Charles on the subject?

"No," replied he, "I have not, as I felt a sort of awkwardness in attempting it, from a fear that he might consider it as an indirect allusion to the subject he so positively prohibited. I will not, therefore, mention it to him till I first speak to Mr. Montague, as he has never, in the most distant manner, alluded to it till his hint to you to-day, which was, I suppose, to guard you against Miss Watkins' observations."

He then added, that he had an apology to make to her, if he did not fear displeasing her.

"Why should you fear that?" said she: "apologies are seldom designedly offensive; but any farther explanation or apology, believe me, I require not."

"It is not for myself," cried he; "your generous kindness has relieved me from every apprehension."

"From whom, then?" said she, much surprised.

"Elmore," replied he, "cannot forgive himself for having blindly yielded his better judgment to his regard for me; for, though he hesitated in his belief of the assertion to which

I so credulously trusted, and, at first, very strenuously urged me to come to a distinct explanation, yet, on finding how implicitly I believed the story, he at length gave up the point, and bent his whole attention to sooth my feelings, and assist me to support a part which I found so difficult. Is it, then, too much to ask, that for my sake, generously consigning all the past to oblivion, you will henceforward view him as a friend a thousand times dearer to my heart than a brother? This is a request he would himself make, did not delicacy withhold him, as he incessantly laments the offence he has been induced to offer one he has ever sincerely admired and esteemed;—one whose regard and good opinion he is most anxiously solicitous to acquire."

"Mr. Elmore's conduct," cried Sidney, blushing deeply, "since our first acquaintance, has ever merited and obtained my sincerest gratitude and esteem; nor can the impression it has made be ever erased from my mind. And you may tell him that, so far from resentment, I feel added regard for his late behaviour, that, without being even indi-

rectly offensive to me, has only evinced how truly deserving he is of your affection; and I feel more sincerely grateful for it than for any other part of his conduct; as any act of kindness or friendship to you," continued she, lowering her voice almost to a whisper, "I shall ever consider as a peculiar obligation to myself."

Scarcely could the consciousness of the numbers by whom he was surrounded restrain Sedley's transports at an assurance that proved how sincerely he was beloved; but, on observing Anna approaching, he compelled himself into silence.

"I am afraid, Major," cried she, "that you find this a very dull party.—I must confess I do; and have, therefore, been racking my brain to devise some sort of amusement to beguile the tedious hours; but the only one I can think of," added she, looking very archly, "is the silly game of cross purposes. Suppose we all set about playing it:—Have you ever tried?—Do you think you could perform your part to advantage?"

"I don't doubt but I might," replied he,

laughing, and instantly comprehending her meaning; "but I must confess it is not a very favourite game of mine; so, if you please, we will substitute some other in its room."

"What a pity," exclaimed she, "that it does not suit your taste, when we could form such a nice party! Charles and Sidney are admirable performers; I believe I am a tolerable proficient myself; and I don't doubt but Captain Elmore might do extremely well. What do you think?" continued she, addressing him. "Have you ever given a specimen of your abilities?"

"Such an one," cried he, colouring, though laughing, "as I hope you will not call on me to repeat; as I must declare that I think the confusion it creates infinitely surpasses any amusement the game can afford."

"What an unfortunate game I have proposed!" cried Anna, excessively entertained. "I dare say, Sidney, I need not apply to you: your opinion I can very well divine."

"What is all this about?" cried Charles, advancing. "What is it, Anna, has so much entertained you?"

"I have been proposing a game of cross purposes," replied Anna, "by way of passing the evening agreeably; and all this good party have politely declared their utter aversion to it."

"You had better take care," cried Charles, colouring high, "that, like your brother, you are not a little too fond of it: but there has been enough of this nonsense already."

Anna, perceiving that he was hurt, made no reply; and Captain Elmore prudently started another subject.

During the remainder of the evening, Major Sedley had no farther opportunity of again addressing any private conversation to Sidney; and she observed, that Fanny and Mr. French watched them both with incessant attention; but, hoping that a few days would render any farther disguise of her feelings as unnecessary as it was disagreeable, she did not experience any great share of uneasiness.

CHAP. IV.

On Fanny's coming into the breakfast-room next morning, before either Mr. or Mrs. Montague, she began to speak of Major Sedley, with her usual bitterness, and of the strange manner in which he acted; sometimes appearing so much out of humour, that it was really disagreeable to look at him; and, at others, forsooth, as if he condescended to be pleased; she concluded her observations by remarking, that she hoped those who studied his whims would be rewarded for the trouble they took.

"I hope so, most sincerely," returned Anna, who pretended not to understand her, "as they certainly deserve it."

"That may not be the best means of succeeding, however," said Fanny, pleased at what she considered Anna's concurrence in her spleen; "but those who have no other

recommendation must only try what art can effect."

"I am afraid it will not effect much," cried Anna, laughing. "I have seen it tried to very little purpose."

Unconscious of the sneer Anna conveyed in these words, Fanny replied in the same strain, and was with similar, though disguised severity, answered by Anna. Sidney, though perfectly aware against whom Fanny's allusions were directed, disdained to notice them; deriving sufficient patience and forbearance from the reflection that Fanny would have but for a short a time the power of torturing her.

As Charles had gone out early in the morning to hunt, the family sat down to breakfast without him. Before it was quite concluded, a servant entered with letters and newspapers, which he laid on the table before his master.

Mr. Montague took up the letters, and looked at the direction and seal of one with particular attention: then, putting it with the rest into his pocket unopened, unfolded the newspapers, and read aloud such passages as

he thought most likely to entertain Mrs. Montague till breakfast was over, when he retired to his study.

He had not been more than half an hour gone when a servant came into the drawing-room, and told Sidney that his master begged to speak with her immediately on particular business.

Concluding it was an application on the part of the Hamiltons, as term had just commenced, and as Mr. Montague had already written to his lawyers to commence proceedings, Sidney hastily went to the study, and, with infinite surprise and terror, saw her uncle standing up, with his whole countenance exhibiting an expression of gloomy rage, such as she had never before witnessed.

Struck with an instantaneous apprehension that, among the letters Mr. Montague had received, one was to announce that the Hamiltons had fully established their unjust claims to her property, and might, by those means, totally prevent her union with Sedley, as his friends might then interfere to prevent it, scarcely could she reach a chair; but, finding

her uncle still maintained silence, she at length summoned sufficient resolution to hear the worst; and said, "James told me, sir, that you wished to speak to me on business."

Mr. Montague, drawing a letter from his pocket, threw it on the table before her, saying sternly, "Read that letter, and I will then speak to you."

Sidney, confirmed in her fears, took up the letter with a trembling hand, and read the following lines :—

For——Montague, Esq.

"Sir,

"To encourage the addresses of any young man in a clandestine manner, or in opposition to the wishes of his father, is conduct so unworthy the character of a gentleman, that I can with difficulty prevail on myself to believe that you could act such a part. Lest, however, you should plead ignorance on this subject, or that my son, Major Sedley, may have deceived you, by representing that

he had my sanction and permission to address your niece, I now explicitly declare that I have the most insuperable objections to his forming such a connexion.

I therefore desire that no farther steps may be taken in an affair of which I was perfectly ignorant till a few days since.

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"WILLIAM SEDLEY."

"*Sedley-Park*,
"*November*, 180—."

Sidney's emotions, on reading this letter, no language can describe. The paper fell from her hands; and, gasping for breath, she experienced a feeling of suffocation in vainly trying to control her sensations.

Mr. Montague, who had stood looking at her in silent wrath, on perceiving her so violently affeced, threw up a window to give her air; and then approaching her, said in a stifled voice, "Endeavour to subdue your emotion, and answer the questions which I have to ask you."

Revived by the air, and terrified by her uncle's look and words, Sidney tried to obey him ; but, though she no longer panted for breath, she ineffectually struggled to recover the shock this cruel and unexpected blight of her hopes had given her.

Mr. Montague, who was pacing the room with the quick and irregular steps of passion, on observing that she was apparently calm, advanced to where she was sitting, and said, sternly, " Tell me without a moment's hesitation, Sidney, without any evasion tell me, how I am to account for the insolent letter I have put into your hands."

" I cannot, sir," replied Sidney, in a low voice ; " I am unable."

" What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Montague, starting with surprise. " Is it that you are really ignorant, or that you do not choose to answer me ?".

" I will answer any question that I understand, sir," said Sidney, trembling.

" Mr. Montague, perceiving that she was totally overpowered, and that agitation, and not wilful perverseness, prevented her either

perfectly comprehending or being enabled to reply to his questions, again walked through the room, to give her time to recover; when Sidney, making a violent effort to recall her stunned and scattered senses, in some degree succeeded.

After some time, Mr. Montague, approaching her, said in a milder tone, "As you value my future esteem, affection, or confidence, Sidney, answer explicitly to a question you cannot misunderstand: Has Major Sedley made you any clandestine proposals which could authorize an insult, that, while I exist, I never will forget or pardon?"

Shocked and overpowered by her uncle's violence, Sidney was unable to speak. Mr. Montague, after waiting a few moments in silent expectation of a reply, fiercely exclaimed, "I will no longer be trifled with; I will ask those questions where they shall be answered."

He was leaving the room, when Sidney, aroused by the new and sudden terror of what might be the result of a meeting between him and Sedley in his present frame of temper, exclaimed with agonized earnestness, "Oh, do

not leave me, uncle; I will tell you every thing that has passed, if you only give me a few moments to recollect myself."

"Major Sedley has made clandestine proposals, then," cried Mr. Montague, fury flashing from his eyes: "if so, he has acted like a rascal, and as such he shall be treated."

"Oh no, he has not; indeed he has not," replied Sidney, shuddering; "but, uncle, indeed you terrify me; you deprive me of all power of speaking."

"What strange inconsistency!" cried Mr. Montague: "however, I will give you your own time."

Recovered from the first shock by the second and severer one,—the dread of such a meeting taking place between Sedley and her uncle,—Sidney was in a few moments enabled to speak, when, in tremulous accents, she related all that had passed between her and the Major.

"Why," cried Mr. Montague, "did you not instantly tell this? and not, by your silence, subject me to an insult, that makes my blood boil with indignation."

To this question Sidney replied by stating Sedley's request, and the reasons he had assigned for making it.

" He is a villain!" exclaimed Mr. Montague fiercely, " He has basely imposed on your credulity. The time, he told you that he went to Dublin, he went to his father's ; and merely wished to deceive you into a clandestine correspondence with him, as he has infamously deceived his father respecting his own conduct."

" Oh no, sir," cried Sidney, losing her terror of her uncle in anger at hearing Sedley so injuriously spoken of, " he has not, he could not, act such a part."

" Perhaps you know the world better than I do," retorted Mr. Montague angrily, " and can tell me why, if he did not do so, I have received such a letter."

" Do not speak to me in this cruel manner," said Sidney, bursting into tears : " I may have acted weakly, rashly; but surely I do not deserve such unkindness."

" I did not intend to wound your feelings, Sidney," said Mr. Montague, sorry at seeing

her thus affected; "but I am not master of myself at this moment; such an insult as I have received, no man could brook."

"I am grieved, shocked beyond measure," said Sidney, weeping, "that I have been in any degree instrumental to your receiving such an insult."

"You have acted weakly, rashly," cried Mr. Montague, more mildly, "in suffering yourself to become the dupe of a designing fellow; but have, in no other instance, been to blame, than in not acquainting me with his proposals the moment he made them. The past you cannot now recall; but, if you wish to atone for it, do not in future either see or correspond with him without my knowledge."

To promise this Sidney did not hesitate an instant. Mr. Montague then, tenderly embracing her, declared his displeasure to her wholly at an end; and, sitting down, began to write.

Sidney, rising, was leaving the room, when Mr. Montague desiring her to remain where she was, as he wished to shew her what he

was writing, she obeyed in silence; and, in a few moments, he put the following lines into her hand:—

"For Major Sedley,

"Sir,

"After the base and dishonourable conduct you have practised, in endeavouring to deceive Miss S. Montague into a clandestine correspondence with you, it is almost superfluous to say that I shall dispense with your future visits at Belle Vue; but it may be as well to apprize you that any farther attempt to see or correspond with her I shall consider and resent as an insult offered to

"Orby H. Montague."

"Belle Vue,
"Thursday Morning."

Sidney, inexpressibly shocked at reading such a letter addressed to Major Sedley, said, in a low and hesitating manner, "Would not simply forbidding him your house answer as well, uncle? I cannot believe he has acted basely."

"Sidney," cried Mr. Montague, sternly, "I will not listen to a word on this subject, as I must consider myself the best judge of my own actions on receiving an insult such as cannot be offered to a man of my character with impunity."

Then sealing his letter, and ringing the bell, a servant appeared, who was told to carry it to C——, to Major Sedley.

"Shall I wait for an answer, sir?" said the man.

"No," replied Mr. Montague; "it requires none."

The servant leaving the room, Mr. Montague said, "You will now, Sidney, retire to your chamber, and endeavour to tranquillize your spirits, and avoid any appearance of dejection that might give rise to a suspicion of what has occurred; and which, I need scarcely say, I should very much dislike to have suspected. The only proper mode of treating such an insult is passing it over with the silent contempt it deserves; and that I should hope, your own pride and spirit will enable you to do."

Sidney made no reply; but, perceiving Mr. Sedley's letter on the ground, where it had dropped from her hand, and feeling a strong desire to read again what as yet she but imperfectly understood, she took it up, and retired to her room, locking her door to prevent any intrusion. She again perused the letter, which had roused her uncle to a pitch of rage she had not believed him capable of feeling.

Now enabled to understand and reflect on the insinuation it conveyed, of a desire on the part of herself and family to lure Major Sedley into clandestine marriage with her, together with the haughty rejection, so decidedly expressed, of any such connexion with her, she could no longer feel surprised at her uncle's indignation, and even, in some degree, participated in his feelings.

She now too remembered his accusation of Sedley, and how fully he believed him guilty of intending to deceive her; the recollection calming the first violence of her feelings, she endeavoured to remember, and retrace, the whole of the Major's conduct.

The dislike he had expressed of speaking to Mr. Montague till his uncle's return to the kingdom first occurred to her; and she could not avoid a momentary apprehension that Mr. Montague had not unjustly accused him of duplicity, when she recollected how solemnly he had pledged his honour that from his father, he entertained no fear of either opposition or interference.

Memory, thus awakened, led her back to a recollection of several trifling incidents, that had, at the time, surprised her in Sedley's conduct with respect to his father; and to the hints he had frequently dropped, of how much they differed in opinion on many subjects. From thence she inferred that he and his father must have quarrelled; and that, if he had indeed purposed to act honourably towards her, his intention must have been, in defiance of his authority, to have persuaded his uncle to induce Mr. Montague to accept of his proposals on those terms; she also concluded that his father's fortune was settled in such a manner, that his disobedience to his wishes

and commands could not ultimately affect his future prospects.

Yet, even allowing all this to be true, it did not account for Mr. Sedley's letter, for she could scarcely suppose the Major so abandoned in principle, and so devoid of common sense, as to have informed his father of his intentions, for the mere purpose of wantonly insulting, or insolently braving, his authority. This reflection gave her a sudden thrill of horror, from the suspicion to which it gave rise that Sedley was indeed the designing and abandoned character her uncle had, in the heat of passion, represented him; or, that he had himself furnished his father with the information, and in terms which had induced such a letter to Mr. Montague as would at once put an end to the affair.

This, however, was but the thought of a moment. To believe Major Sedley so abandoned, was to believe him devoid of common sense; and that, no person who knew him could for an instant suppose; as, however he at times suffered his passions to obscure his

judgment or warp his feelings, superior abilities he undoubtedly possessed; and the most scrupulous honour, every person, who knew him intimately, ascribed to him. A recollection of how lately she had been led to accuse him unjustly, from being unacquainted with the motives of his conduct, made her hastily revolt from being again, and so soon, guilty of similar injustice.

How then was she to explain what at present appeared so inexplicable? Farther reflection, and cooler deliberation, naturally solved the mystery. The lawyer, to whom Sedley told her he had applied, and to whom he had of course avowed his intentions, might have considered himself called on to apprize his father of them; and Mr. Sedley, enraged at the idea of his permission being unsought, or his authority defied, had written his letter for the purpose of punishing his son, by defeating his intentions; as, after such a letter, no family, possessed of common feelings, could have consented to a connexion on any terms. Though this solution did not exculpate Sedley from the charge of in-

tended disobedience, yet it justified him in every other instance except that of solemnly pledging his honour, that, from his father, he neither expected nor apprehended any opposition; for which she could only account by supposing that Sedley believed his father's indifference to him such, that he cared not how he acted; and, influenced by that supposition, he had endeavoured to sooth her fears, without alarming her delicacy.

She could not, therefore, feel satisfied with Sedley: his conduct, if not dishonourable, had been, at least, uncandid, and such as he ought not to have practised: it had exposed herself and family to an insult, such as her uncle could not pardon. Thus alternately the prey sorrow and resentment, each, by turns, predominated, till, overpowered by the violence of such conflicting emotions, she ceased almost entirely to think or feel; at length roused by a recollection of her uncle's charge of avoiding any display of her feelings, which would more acutely barb the insult offered to his pride, she determined vigorously to subdue every sensation of regret, and thus convince him that she was in no

degree deficient in the spirit that had ever distinguished her family.

The necessity for this effort compelled the unwilling exertion; and her native pride and delicacy strongly enforcing its propriety, she at length became sufficiently calm to dress herself, to join the family in the drawing-room. Summoning all the inherent haughtiness of the family to her aid, to conquer vain tenderness and regrets, which could only expose her to the resentment of her friends, the derision of strangers, and the consequent reproaches of her own heart, she descended the stairs with a firm step and determined composure of manner; though the languor of her eyes, and the deep crimson of her cheek, too strongly marked the internal tumult of her mind.

On entering the drawing-room, she observed Mr. Montague sitting in a gloomy and thoughtful posture near the fire. He watched her, for some moments after her entrance, with incessant attention; but, on perceiving her reply to some question Mrs. Montague asked with a deliberate calmness, which her violent agitation in the study had not prepared him

to expect, he gave her a glance of such approving kindness as nearly overset her hardly-acquired fortitude, and then took no farther notice of her.

The servant, whom Mr. Montague had sent to C—— with his letter to Major Sedley, coming into the room, told his master, that, on going to his lodgings, his servant had informed him his master and Captain Elmore had gone with a detachment to a town at some miles distance, and were not expected back till night: he had therefore left the letter with the servant, who had promised to deliver it the moment his master returned.

"Very well," replied Mr. Montague; "that was sufficient."

Mrs. Montague, though extremely surprised by a manner so unusual to her husband, forbore to make any inquiries, and merely endeavoured to sooth him; certain that he would tell her what had occurred to excite his displeasure the moment he could in any degree calm his feelings; and knowing that, till then, he would neither answer nor endure the slightest interrogation.

As the family were sitting down to dinner, they were joined by Charles, in high spirits from his recent excursion; and he for some time displayed his usual sprightliness; but, on observing his father's look and manner, and the no less striking alteration in Sidney's countenance and behaviour, his mirth was suddenly checked by an apprehension that something seriously distressing had occurred; and, like Sidney herself, concluded it must have related to her affairs with the Hamilton family. Impressed with this idea, and feeling for the evident distress of his father, he subdued his curiosity, and tried to divert his attention; nor were his efforts wholly unsuccessful, as Mr. Montague's sternness and gloomy silence at length relaxed into something like a wish to converse with his son; and, Mrs. Montague, on observing this, left them together.

Neither Mr. Montague nor Charles made their appearance in the drawing-room till tea was ready, when they came in together; and Sidney, glancing her eyes towards Charles as he entered, involuntarily started, from a mingled sensation of fear and horror, on observing

the rage that possessed his whole countenance, and the violent, though restrained, agitation of his manner.

Instead of joining his family, and promoting, as usual, the entertainment of the party, immediately on his entrance he went to a sofa, and, throwing himself on it, sullenly rejected all his mother's entreaties to come to tea, or suffer her to send him some where he was.

Mrs. Montague, alarmed at seeing him continue to lie on the sofa, though evidently not asleep, nor complaining of any unusual fatigue, at length went to him, and tenderly inquired if he felt himself indisposed; but, convinced by his manner of replying that anger and not illness oppressed him, she forbore any farther question; and though still more surprised, and even much alarmed, by both his and his father's manner, she did not again take any notice of either. Fanny and Miss Watkins, though tortured with curiosity, were also obliged to confine it to their own breasts.

Thus passed a melancholy and unsocial evening, such as Sidney had never before witnessed at Belle Vue; but, glad to be spared any

exertion, the greatest relief she experienced was in being permitted to sit in total unobserved silence.

On retiring for the night, Anna accompanied Sidney to her room, when she instantly satisfied her curiosity by shewing her Mr. Sedley's letter, and telling her of the one her uncle had written to his son.

The perusal of this letter roused all the pride of Anna's disposition into flame, and scarcely could she find words in which to express her indignation against Major Sedley and his father; totally confounding their conduct as Mr. Montague had done; but, on Sidney's mildly requesting her to forbear the subject, as she could not endure to hear it discussed, she good-naturedly consented, and retired to her room, leaving Sidney a prey to feelings which she vainly endeavoured to bury in the temporary oblivion of sleep.

CHAP. V.

SIDNEY was scarcely dressed next morning, when a maid-servant entered the room with a message from Charles, requesting that she would put on her pelisse and hat, as he wished to take a walk with her.

To speak of Sedley, she knew, was the object of this request; and, anxious to hear Charles's opinion of his conduct, she hastened down stairs, and, meeting him in the hall, they set out together, Charles choosing one of the most retired walks through the grounds.

Both continued silent till they were at some distance from the house, when Charles said, "My father tells me, Sidney, that you have that insolent letter he received yesterday; I wish to see it."

"Do not ask to see it, Charles," cried Sidney, agitated and alarmed; "it will only

give you fresh pain, and perhaps urge you to some extravagance."

"Do not terrify yourself unnecessarily," replied he, "as, whatever may be my inclination, I have deprived myself of the power of acting. Before my father would mention a syllable of the subject, he exacted my promise not in any way to interfere without his permission; very far from suspecting his motive for making such a demand, I readily gave the assurance he required, and cannot now take any part whatever: so shew me the letter, if you have it about you; if not, we can return for it."

"I have it in my pocket," said Sidney, "and will shew it you this moment; but, will you first oblige me so far as to say what is your opinion of Major Sedley's conduct?"

"I scarcely know what opinion to form," replied he; "I have ever considered him a man of the strictest honour, and such is the character he universally bears: yet my father thinks he has acted a most base and designing part, and had no other intention than that of

betraying you into a clandestine correspondence with him : you, however, must be the best judge of that. What did he say to you? Did he give you any reason to suppose that Mr. Sedley would be averse to the union? for my father was so enraged, that I could but very imperfectly understand the account he said you gave him."

Sidney related, with as much precision as her agitation would permit, every circumstance that had taken place on the evening of the discovery of her father's picture by Sedley, and what had since occurred.

"I am more likely than ever to repent my folly," cried Charles, forgetting how completely he had prohibited that subject: "had it not been for me, you never would have been thrown so unguardedly into his power. All I can now do to atone for it is to step forward in your defence, and protect you as far as I can, from every unpleasant consequence. Now shew me the letter, and from that, perhaps, I can form a better judgment of how Sedley has acted."

"Oh no," cried Sidney, giving him the letter, "from that, I hope, you will not form any."

Charles made no reply, but read Mr. Sedley's letter, when, in a voice scarcely audible from passion, he exclaimed, "You say Sedley pledged his honour he that feared no opposition from his father."

"He did," replied Sidney, terrified; "he did indeed; but what of that?"

"Then he uttered a base deliberate falsehood," exclaimed Charles, "and so I will tell him to his face."

Rolling up the letter in his hand, and casting it from him on the ground, he broke from Sidney's feeble grasp, and was hurrying down the walk with an intention of proceeding to C——, and openly taxing Major Sedley with his perfidy; till, arrested by hearing a piercing scream, he looked round, and saw Sidney lying motionless on the ground.

Shocked at the effects of his violence, he hesitated how to act; but, unable to leave her in such a situation, he returned, and, lifting her

in his arms, carried her to a seat at some distance.

With returning recollection returned all Sidney's horror; and, grasping Charles's arm, she exclaimed, in an agony of terror, "Oh Charles! if you do not wish to render me a wretch for life, do not leave me; oh, stay with me, and let me speak to you."

"We will speak no more of the matter," replied he, calmly; "rise if you are able, and let me assist you to the house."

"No, no," cried she, still more frightened by the forced calmness of his manner, "I cannot go to the house; I cannot leave you; I must speak to you, and you must hear me."

"You must do as I desire you," exclaimed Charles, angrily; "I have nothing more to hear, and I will speak no farther on the subject."

"Is this your promise to my uncle?" cried she, in agony; "if you are indifferent to my feelings, can you forget, can you break, your plighted honour?"

"I will forget any thing, break through any

promise," replied he, fiercely, finding it vain to think of deceiving her, " before I will suffer such conduct to pass unpunished ; or allow such a designing, profligate fellow to believe that I feared to meet him ; and such he must think, and would publish, after the apology I was fool enough to make him, when I believed I had injured him. If I could recall that day, Sedley would not now triumph."

" And can nothing but his blood atone," cried Sidney, " for the unintended injury he has committed? He might have proposed to brave his father's authority ; he might have known his own powers of doing so with impunity ; and therefore, in that sense, meant his having no fears of him, which I misunderstood : he may, and I think he has, done all this. But, oh Charles, recollect his conduct on the day to which you allude, on every occasion on which you have seen him tried, and say does it warrant the belief that he could be guilty of deliberate falsehood and perfidy? If I am no object with you, if my feelings have no weight with you, think of my aunt, of my uncle, of what they must suffer; and remem-

ber too my uncle's opinion that to take any notice of the affair would only point the insult, and render it public."

Whatever were the strength and violence of Charles's passions, his understanding was too good to allow him to remain a moment insensible to the voice of truth when he permitted himself to listen to it; and the representation made of Sedley's conduct, and the probable result of his own, was too reasonable not to force conviction on his mind. His anger was partly cooled by the reflection, that, however Sedley might have intended to brave his father's authority, he had meant neither treachery to Sidney, nor insult to her family, though too ready to hazard every thing to secure her hand: and that whatever impropriety there might have been in his conduct, or however delusive his expectations would have proved, yet, in the peculiar circumstances of the case it admitted of some palliation from so young a man as himself, prone as he was to equally vehement passions. His eagerness to punish these doubtful errors, with the utmost severity of revenge, was beginning

to subside, when suddenly recollecting that if Sedley had not applied to his father, he could not have gained the information, he asked Sidney if she could account for that circumstance.

Revived by his long deliberation, and the returning calmness of his manner, Sidney gave him the only information which her own reflections on the subject could afford; a conjecture that the lawyer to whom Sedley had applied had been the person from whom his father had gained his intelligence; and that to punish his son for his conduct to himself, had alone prompted Mr. Sedley, in the first impulse of passion, to offer such an insult to the Montague family as would induce them to assist him in such a scheme.

"Perhaps you are right," cried Charles, after a pause. "I have reason to think, from French, that Sedley and his father have been long on cool terms; and I also now recollect Sedley's estate is entailed; for, during his illness here, I drew up a will for him, bequeathing a property he inherits from his mother to Elmore, as he told me the Sedley

estate was entailed on his two sisters, in case of his dying without children. Such, he said, had been his grandfather's will, for the express purpose of cutting out General Sedley, his second son, who had offended him. You may, therefore, be right in your conjecture; and, as my father's letter has sufficiently punished Sedley for venturing to hope that on such terms he would be received into our family, I will not take any notice of the affair, which might, as you justly remark, merely gratify the insolent old fellow himself."

Relieved and delighted by this assurance, Sidney thanked Charles with great warmth; then added, "I would not urge my affection to yourself, Charles, because, at the moment I knew it would have no weight with you; but never should I have felt peace if through my means you had been lost to me and to your family; and I cannot express the sorrow I feel for having, however innocently, been the cause of you and my uncle experiencing such uneasiness, and meeting such insult."

"It cannot now be avoided," cried Charles, "and you are not to blame, for you could not

have suspected Sedley of forming such a plan; and he does, I know, love you most passionately, and would, I am well convinced, do any thing he thought would secure you his; but," added he, checking himself, "the part he did act was highly indelicate; he ought, at least, to have mentioned his intentions to me. However, it is all over now, and the sooner you can forget it the better; but, as you value your future peace, be careful of allowing either Miss Watkins or Fanny to suppose that you feel any concern on the subject. Know it they must, and, if they think you are unhappy they will torment you without mercy. I will do all I can to assist you, and silence them; but, unless you act with courage and resolution, all will be vain, as I cannot prevent their throwing out their confounded sneers when I am not present."

Sidney gratefully thanked Charles for his kindness and good nature, which neither insult nor anger could for more than a moment obscure, and then consented to accompany him to the house, after first taking up Mr. Sedley's letter from the ground.

On their return they found all the family assembled at breakfast. Mr. Montague, perceiving by Sidney's colour that she had been walking, angrily demanded where she had been."

"She was walking with me, sir," replied Charles.

Mr. Montague said no more; and Mrs. Montague, now informed by her husband of what had taken place, and perceiving by her son's manner to Sidney how much any attention to her would gratify him, and perfectly satisfied on finding how differently she had disposed of her affections from what she had been led to suspect, addressed her with a degree of kindness, and behaved to her with a degree of attention, that mortified Fanny as much as it gratified Charles.

Before breakfast was quite concluded, a servant came in with a letter, and laying it on the table before Sidney, said a man was waiting to know if it required an answer.

"No," replied Mr. Montague, sternly, recognising that the direction was in Major Sedley's hand, "it requires none."

Charles, observing that Sidney, who had grown white as marble on seeing from whom the letter came, did not attempt to take it up, turned the direction underneath, to prevent its being recognised by Fanny or Miss Watkins, who were perfectly acquainted with Sedley's hand.

" Put up your letter, Sidney," said Mr. Montague, in a voice of cold and gloomy displeasure, " and come to my study as soon as you are at leisure, as I wish to have some conversation with you."

" Dear me, what is the matter with you, Sidney?" cried Fanny, sneeringly; " you look as if you were going to faint: perhaps," added she, with a malicious laugh, " that letter may come from a concealed lover, and that you are afraid of papa's discovering it."

" If you really thought so, Fanny," cried Mr. Montague, sternly, " you should have forborne the observation; and I must desire that none such are addressed to Sidney in future."

" I was only jesting," said Fanny, peevishly, " as I really care very little on the subject."

"You do not always say what you think, Fanny, my love," cried Mrs. Montague, "as you certainly do feel interested about your cousin."

Fanny tossed her head disdainfully, but made no reply. Charles, pitying the feelings he saw depicted on Sidney's countenance, said, "I am afraid I made you walk too far this morning, Sidney; perhaps you had better retire to your room till you recover from your fatigue."

Sidney tried to force a smile; but, without attempting any reply, rose from table, and retired, as Charles had advised her.

On reaching her room, she secured herself from any danger of interruption; and, taking Sedley's letter from her pocket, with trembling hands and a beating heart broke the seal, and read the following lines:—

"For Miss S. Montague.

"How shall I address you,—how calm the agitation of my mind,—to form some opinion of what has occurred? For hours have I in vain attempted it; nor has the tumult of my feelings yet subsided on receiving, on my

return late last night, a letter from Mr. Montague, accusing me of base and dishonourable conduct, and forbidding me his house in terms purposely designed to insult me.

" How have I acted dishonourably,—what effort have I made so basely to abuse the kindness and hospitality I experienced at his house,—as to endeavour to beguile you into a clandestine correspondence with me?—for such are his words.

" My mind is in such a tumult, I know not what I would, or what I ought, to write,—and Elmore is not here to assist me; but I wish to ask you, if it was not mere ideal fancy that you agreed to my request of awaiting my uncle's return to the kingdom; or if you can have been induced to view conduct, instigated by the most fervent affection, as proceeding from designed and deliberate baseness? Perhaps I may still farther offend you by endeavouring to point out how impossible it was that I could have intended any thing dishonourable: it may be so, for I am not perfect master of myself; I know not what I ought to say; but how, let me ask, could I have

meditated such a design, when young Montague knew of my proposals to you, and so far authorized the pretensions I avowed as to desire you to shew me the letter he had written for the purpose of explaining his own conduct? Can he be suspected of assisting me in such a plan,—he who is ever ready to repel with instant violence whatever he thought bordered on disrespect to himself, or any member of his family?

"Yet, perhaps I may be again deceived,—again the dupe of frolic or of malice. The hand is, indeed, Mr. Montague's; but may not he also be deceived? or, at least, may not you be wholly ignorant of the cruel, the undeserved insult that has been offered to me?—Oh, yes! a something whispers to my heart that you did not,—could not, authorize such a step; and that you would, with tenderness similar to that with which, on a former occasion you poured balm into my tortured breast, have gently soothed the anguish I have endured for the last few hours, during which I have, in a state of phrensied distraction, paced my room, unable to rest or think.

"Oh, then, generously hasten, dearest, most beloved of human beings, to relieve the torture I endure, and which no confidence I can feel in your honour or affection can mitigate while in a state of such agonizing uncertainty: tell me I am not in every way injured and insulted; from no pen, no tongue but your own, will I be induced to credit, that one so adored, one on whom my every hope of happiness rested, has smiled but to deceive,—has promised but to betray,—has soothed my sufferings, encouraged my hopes, with no other intention than more certainly, more fatally, to overwhelm me with anguish.

"I would have this morning gone to Belle Vue, for the purpose of demanding an explanation from Mr. Montague, had not a dread of what might have followed withheld me: against a member of your family I cannot resolve to raise my arm in any act of hostility, yet farther insult I could not have endured.

"I fear you will think I have lost my senses; and I fancy they are not quite at present what they ought to be; but I cannot regulate my thoughts,—cannot express my meaning; and every effort I have made to do

so has hitherto failed; but you, I cannot, will not, believe have deceived me: to you I still fondly trust; in you I place the most implicit confidence; and will with eager impatience await the return of my messenger, under the transporting hope that your answer will assure me you are as ignorant as myself of any reason for what has passed; and, when once assured of this, I shall then be sufficiently master of myself to demand and to give an explanation to Mr. Montague.

"Do not, I entreat, interpret ravings I could neither regulate, nor even attempt to rewrite, as intended to offend you: no insult, no injury I could meet, could rouse me to an action, or prompt me to a hint I thought would offend you, while indulging the belief I still cherish, and that your own words alone can destroy, that you are the same unaltered beloved being I quitted with such fond hopes, such tender confidence, but a few hours since, and that no power will withhold you from conveying that assurance to your still unalterably devoted

"O. A. Sedley."

"*Friday morning.*"

Her late resentment quickly yielded to heart-rending anguish on perusing this letter, that so forcibly—so mournfully—convinced Sidney of her power over Sedley's heart, when the prospect of losing her could so far overpower his fortitude and his pride as to render him nearly insensible to every thing but the loss of her affection. Her first and most ardent wish was to write, and assure him that, however impossible might be their union under existing circumstances, no time could rob him of her confidence and esteem.

A little reflection convinced her not only of the impracticability, but of the impropriety, of such a step: she had promised to her uncle not to hold any correspondence with Sedley without his knowledge; and, even if she had not done so, could she so far justify and authorize Mr. Sedley's insinuation as to convince his son that he had not unjustly accused her, and that she was equally willing with himself to brave his authority?

"No, no," cried she, weeping, "let me not wilfully encounter any farther misery. I have, indeed, suffered; yet let me not lose the only

consolation I feel, in knowing I have not deserved it. To what insult, what torture, has not poor Sedley exposed himself by his intended disobedience! That he could have meant to act in defiance of his father's authority, I could not have believed; but, perhaps, if I knew all, I might find there were reasons to excuse, if not to justify, such an intention; for, that Mr. Sedley is not, cannot be, a good father, he has too fully proved."

On again reading the letter, and more maturely weighing its contents, she was surprised to observe how utterly ignorant he appeared of any reason for Mr. Montague's letter. Surely he might reasonably conclude that a discovery of his designs could alone have produced it. "Yet, perhaps," thought she, "he does not yet know they have been discovered: if so, what torture he must have endured! But he will soon know all, and then he must acquit me, let my uncle act what part he will; for by his authority he knows I must be guided."

This reflection awakening a recollection of her uncle's desire that she should attend him

in his study, she started at the length of time she had suffered to elapse without obeying his commands; and then also recollecting that he had seen the letter, and would insist on reading it, she felt the cruellest sensations of confusion at the idea of being obliged to give such a letter for his perusal; but no alternative remained. In her father's place he stood; as her father he had, on all occasions that required his interference, acted; and, however violently in the late affair, he had treated her precisely as he would a daughter of his own; and to the same degree of duty which she would have considered due to her father she now thought him indisputably entitled; endeavouring therefore to subdue her emotion, she went to the study.

Charles, who was sitting with his father, rose on her entrance; and, uncertain whether or not she would desire his presence, hesitated for a moment, to be convinced what were her wishes.

On seeing him about to quit the room, Sidney, who anxiously desired the support

which she knew his presence and kindness would afford her, laid her hand on his arm, saying, in a low voice, " Oh, don't leave me!"

" I will not," replied he, hastily; " give the letter to my father, and trust to me."

Sidney did as he desired, and, without speaking, gave the letter to Mr. Montague.

" Do not look so terrified, so unhappy, Sidney," cried Charles, on perceiving his father's attention occupied in reading the letter: " whatever takes place, rest assured of my support; you deserve it, and shall receive it to the fullest extent."

Sidney could only thank him by pressing his hand: she could not speak, and sat down in silence to await her uncle's pleasure.

Mr. Montague, having read the letter, put it into his son's hand, saying, with a smile of ineffable contempt, " Perfectly accomplished as Major Sedley is in all the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, he will not find me the dupe of his protestations, nor longer have it in his power to deceive an innocent girl, on

whose inexperience he has so basely imposed; but, after reading such a letter, she must view him with the contempt he deserves."

Charles, equally surprised with Sidney at hearing this speech, scarcely waited for its conclusion to cast his eye over Sedley's letter; and, the moment he had read it, said, with some vehemence, "I do not, sir, entertain the same opinion of this letter that you do: that Sedley did intend to propose for Sidney, in defiance of his father's wishes, or perhaps without consulting him, as his estate is entailed, I cannot doubt: his conduct in that instance I cannot defend; but I am convinced that he never meant to entangle Sidney in any clandestine engagement, without the knowledge of her friends: he could not, he dared not have formed such a plan."

"Am I to conclude from this, sir," cried Mr. Montague, with a fierceness that overpowered Sidney with terror, "that Major Sedley's assertion of your knowledge of this affair, which I took for a decided falsehood, is true?—Did you, sir,—could you, have authorized such conduct?"

" Whatever part I have acted, sir," replied Charles, with a countenance glowing with indescribable emotion at being addressed by his father in a style he had never before used to him, " I am not afraid to avow it."

" Avow it instantly then, sir," returned Mr. Montague, trembling with passion, " and convince me I have also been deceived in my son!"

To this stern and abrupt demand Charles was going to reply in a manner very unsuitable to the respect he owed his father, and which, the moment his present indignation had subsided, he would have very sincerely regretted; but Sidney, clasping her hands in an agony of grief, exclaimed, " Oh, Charles, for my sake,—for your own,—restrain yourself! You know not what proposals Major Sedley made me; you were ignorant of every thing, except that he had declared his sentiments; and why unnecessarily irritate my uncle by leading him to suppose you did?"

Charles, too angry to make any effort to appease his father, yet sufficiently recalled to recollection to forbear saying any thing designedly to offend him, replied to her, in a

voice choked by passion, "Has any part of my conduct ever given my father reason to suspect that I could act such a part?"

On seeing his son so violently enraged, and convinced, from his own words, and from Sidney's declaration, that of any thing more than Sedley's attachment he was perfectly ignorant, Mr. Montague did not choose to enter any farther on the subject; but, addressing Sidney, said, "You can now no longer entertain a doubt of Major Sedley's duplicity, as he still persists in affecting ignorance of his father's sentiments; and endeavours, by so mean an artifice, to lead you on still to keep up a correspondence with him. His usual foresight has, however, forsaken him, in sending his letter so publicly; but, as he has thought proper to declare his belief that you are perfectly ignorant of the one I wrote to him yesterday, and might, unless convinced by yourself of the contrary, persist in his impertinent applications, I desire you will write him such a letter as will at once put an end to this most improper affair."

"Perhaps, sir," said Sidney, in a low voice;

"he is still ignorant of his father's letter to you: he may not yet have received one to apprize him of it."

"If he has not," replied Mr. Montague, contemptuously, "it can only be because he does not choose to open it; but, whether he does or does not think proper to read his father's letters, is a matter of perfect indifference to me, and do you do as I desire."

Sidney took the pen her uncle put into her hand, but in vain attempted to obey him: no language could she command to convince Sedley she had not intentionally joined in insulting and suspecting him, without, at the same time, offending her uncle.

Charles having, in some degree recovered his temper, exclaimed, haughtily, "I think it incumbent on me, sir, to tell you, that a foolish frolic, in which I engaged, unavoidably led me to the knowledge of Sedley's attachment to Sidney; though of the nature of his attentions, or that he had made her any direct proposals, I was perfectly ignorant, till, this morning, when I was informed of it by

herself; and, I must repeat, that I cannot believe Major Sedley had any intention of acting dishonourably in any other way than that I have already stated."

"I am sorry," cried Mr. Montague coldly, and offended by his manner, "that I cannot view his conduct in the same light; and I at least am not inclined so lightly to pass over an insult offered to my family, however you may feel disposed."

Charles, was inwardly enraged at a speech which he thought conveyed an insinuation of his being deficient in proper pride and spirit, and replied, in a tone bordering on indignation, "You, sir, are not the person who should make me such a reproach, after having betrayed me into giving my word to be entirely governed by your wishes, before I could be aware of your motives: you have now released me from my promise, and I consider myself as no longer bound to observe it."

He was leaving the room, when Mr. Montague, awakened to a sense of the imprudence of thus rousing his passions into a flame

which he had found so much difficulty to allay on the preceding evening, and regretting that he had irritiated the feelings of a son who sincerely loved him, however anger might for the moment obscure his filial respcct, followed, and, detaining him, mildly said, "It is not acting the part of a friend, Charles, much less that of a son, to embitter a parent's feelings, when peculiarly tender from recent and undeserved insult; or perversely to take offence which you know could not be intended."

"I have always wished to act the part of a dutiful son, to you, sir," cried Charles, with an emotion he could not conquer: "why then should you so cruelly mortify me by the insinuation that I could suffer any member of the family to be insulted with impunity, from want of spirit to resent it?"

"How can you torture any thing I have said into such a meaning?" cried Mr. Montague, warmly: "had I not been but too well convinced of the contrary, should I have taken such care to put it out of your power to make an improper exertion of that spirit? If I have unintentionally wounded your feelings,

my dearest boy, allow for mine, and forgive me; and let us at once conclude an affair that can only be treated as it deserves by being past over in silent contempt."

This speech soothing Charles's anger, he apologized to his father for his improper warmth. They returned together to the table at which Sidney was sitting, who, overpowered with terror at the prospect of a quarrel between them, of which she must consider herself as the cause, could neither attempt to form a letter, or even distinctly to think.

Mr. Montague, perceiving what little progress she had yet made towards obeying his commands, and fearing that her agitation would prevent her doing it in a proper manner, said, "I will myself write such an answer as it is proper for the gentleman to receive."

In a few moments Mr. Montague ceased writing, and, putting the paper in Sidney's hand, said, very haughtily, "As Major Sedley has thought proper to insinuate his belief of my acting with the same duplicity he has himself practised, do you, Sidney, copy out

these lines, and convince him you are not so ignorant of his conduct as he pretends to think."

Sidney took the paper in silence, and cast her eyes over the following lines:—

"FOR MAJOR SEDLEY.

"Sir,

"To your letter of this morning I do not consider myself called upon to give any other answer than simply to assure you that my opinion of your conduct perfectly coincides with that of my uncle, whose letter of yesterday he shewed me, previous to his sending it.

"To address me again on this subject will be superfluous, as any future letter I shall return unopened.

"I am, Sir, &c. &c.

"SIDNEY-ANNE MONTAGUE."

"*Belle Vue,*

"*Friday Noon.*"

Shocked at the idea of being compelled to return such an answer to the letter she had received, Sidney in vain attempted to obey;

and at length, with great agitation, said, "May I not, sir, be equally decided, though more gentle? Is it necessary to use quite so much harshness?"

"Is it your wish, Madam," cried Mr. Montague, angrily, "to allow Major Sedley to believe that you are unwilling to acquiesce in his father's wishes; that you are as devoid of pride and propriety as he insolently intimates; and even ready to meet his son on any terms?"

Confounded by this stern reproof, Sidney did not venture to make any reply: when Charles, looking over the paper, mildly said, "This answer may appear harsh to you, Sidney, but it is only proper; any thing less decided might induce Sedley to form hopes, and to act in a manner of which I need not point out the unavoidable consequences that must follow."

Terrified by a hint which she knew was given for the express purpose of convincing her of the necessity and propriety of instant obedience, Sidney made a violent effort to control her feelings; and, taking a sheet of paper,

she exerted all her self-command, and, with exactness, copied out the words her uncle had written, and gave them into his hand. Mr. Montague, satisfied, said, with more kindness, "Fold and direct this letter, Sidney, and your part of a most disagreeable transaction will then be properly performed."

Sidney took the paper, and did as she was desired; when Mr. Montague, addressing his son, said, "To permit Captain Elmore to continue his visits here, would be impossible: so much as he is in Major's Sedley's confidence, and so well known to be his intimate and bosom friend, it would be an impropriety nearly as great as permitting his own: you will, therefore, my dear fellow, write him a note to that effect. Word it as you please, but dwell as little as possible on the subject; and make the prohibition absolute. I would do it myself; but, as you have always expressed such regard for Elmore, he might consider it more in the light of friendship, coming from you; and, as he has not, ostensibly at least, taken any part in this affair, and has always behaved to you with kindness and at-

tention, I should be sorry to do any thing unnecessarily offensive to him."

"I will, sir," replied Charles: "it is quite proper that it should be done."

He wrote the following note to Elmore, which he put into Sidney's hand when he had written it:—

"FOR CAPTAIN ELMORE.

"My dear Elmore,

"To a man of your nice sense of honour it is almost unnecessary to hint a wish, that, after what has passed, and of which you must be informed by Major Sedley, you will, for the present, discontinue your visits at Belle Vue. So much his second self as you are, there would be a manifest impropriety in your coming, which I need not point out; but, in every other place, and on every other occasion, I shall ever feel most happy to meet and treat you as a friend.

"Your's, most sincerely,

"CHARLES W. MONTAGUE."

"*Belle Vue.*"

"If my uncle approves it, Charles," said Sidney, in a low voice, "I am satisfied."

Mr. Montague saying it met his perfect approbation, Charles sealed both letters, and, calling his servant, told him to take them to C——; then, returning to the room, said to his father, "You will not now, I hope, sir, feel any farther displeasure to either Sidney or myself for conduct into which I undesignedly led her. It is superfluous to say how, as the affair is entirely over: she has acted in a manner that does her the highest honour, and deserves your warmest approbation and esteem; and both, I am convinced, she will meet. For myself, I am sincerely sorry for the past; and, could I recall it, I would; but I have made, and will make, every atonement in my power."

"You may, perhaps, have been giddy," cried Mr. Montague, affectionately, "though how I shall not inquire. But you have in this instance, as on every other occasion acted with that amiable candour which more than redeems a venial fault. May Heaven confirm your

excellent disposition, and render it a lasting source of happiness to yourself!"

Then, tenderly embracing Sidney, he added, "Towards you, my dearest girl, I do not retain any displeasure; you have made every proper atonement for the rashness into which you were unguardedly betrayed; and rest assured, Sidney, into whatever harshness I may have been urged by an insult such as I could not have believed it possible any man could have designed me, I have, throughout this affair, acted for you as I would for either of my own daughters, or as your poor father, had he been alive, would have done. To have temporized a moment could not have been considered in any other light than that of my having approved the designs ascribed to you: recover your spirits, then, my dear girl, and banish entirely from your mind an occurrence unworthy of a place there."

To Mr. Montague's kindness Sidney could make no reply: it affected her more than his severity; and her long-smothered emotions burst forth in tears; when Charles hastily exclaimed,

"Leave Sidney to me, sir; I have a happy faculty of raising people's spirits when they are depressed."

Mr. Montague left the room without speaking; and Charles, with delicacy and prudence, endeavoured to calm her agitation, and divert her attention. He at length succeeded in restoring her to composure; when, with great though melancholy sweetness, she thanked him for his kindness, and his generous defence of Sedley.

"I acted towards him," cried he, eagerly, "as I wish to do to every man, unless when thrown off my guard by passion; and as, I believe, most justly. Could I, without degrading both you and myself, in any degree alleviate the disappointment and grief which I know he will feel, I would, to gratify you, do so; but, my dear Sidney, with the understanding you possess, it would be needless to point out the flagrant impropriety of such an attempt; and though I do unfeignedly believe, and will ever, if called on, publicly declare, that I acquit Major Sedley of any intentional disrespect to you; yet, so

lively is the resentment, not to say rage, I feel at his father's insolent letter, that I could not trust myself, if we met by chance, for not speaking of it in terms which he could not in common decency avoid resenting; and this, for my own sake, as well as your's, I should not wish; as I have no desire to entangle him or myself in a quarrel. Elmore, from similar reasons, I should as little like to meet; as I know his regard to the whole Sedley family is such, that he would think himself called on to defend their conduct, if publicly arraigned, however in his own heart he might disapprove it. I do not make this representation to terrify you, but merely to reconcile you to the part you have just acted, which I know you felt most painful; and to convince you that it was absolutely necessary. Rest assured, that when you can a little recover from your present feelings, you will sincerely rejoice in conduct that not only reflects the greatest credit on your sense and gentleness, but which has saved you from the misery you would have experienced, had you, by refusing to yield to my father's advice, compelled me, in de-

fence of my own honour, and that of my family, to resent an insult, which you have effected with more propriety. Let these considerations, my dear Sidney, sooth your uneasiness; and believe me I tell you truth in saying, that, when Sedley recovers from the first transports of anger and disappointment, he will more truly admire your present conduct than any other you could have practised, and will do every justice to the motives that impelled it. However his passions have obscured his natural good sense and just principles of honour, the moment he returns to the proper use of his senses he will regret the part he has acted, and feel how superior to his has been your conduct; and, to set your mind at ease, as far, at least, as I can, I promise most solemnly to avoid every chance of meeting him, and to decline every opportunity that might occur of engaging in any altercation with either him or Elmore.

Appeased by his kindness, and consoled by his arguments, to the truth of which she could not remain insensible, Sidney was at length enabled to speak with calmness; when

again, and more tenderly, thanking him, she declared her resolution of making every exertion to recover her spirits, and thus evince a true sense of gratitude for his and her uncle's kindness. Charles, delighted at her promise, then suffered her to leave him, convinced that, till the first fervour of her feelings had a little subsided, to attempt offering any farther consolation, or affect any sort of gaiety, for the purpose of conquering her dejection, would be useless and unfeeling cruelty.

At dinner, Sidney joined the family as usual; and, though no effort could enable her wholly to disguise the heavy melancholy that oppressed her, she was apparently calm and tranquil.

In the evening Charles put into her hand the following note from Captain Elmore:—

"To Charles Montague, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"You did me but justice in thinking, that, after all that has passed, a hint to discontinue my visits would be indeed unnecessary. For the kindness and hospitality I have experienced at your house, accept my best thanks;

though an acquaintance so ended, I shall not pretend to disguise, that I very sincerely lament the having ever formed.

"Your's &c.

"HENRY ELMORE."

"*C*——,
"*Friday Evening.*"

"P. S. I was not at home when your messenger arrived."

The resentment this note indicated strongly impressed Sidney with the conviction of what Sedley's feelings must be when his friend felt himself justified in so openly avowing his displeasure; but she was surprised that, after so long knowing the Montague family, a hope could have been formed of their acquiescing in such a plan, till she recollected her own situation, and considered that, as the Sedley estate was entailed, they might not have believed the Montagues would have been so very scrupulous with respect to one, whose fortune was so disagreeably circumstanced.

This did not indeed argue the nicety of principle, or the delicacy of pride which Sedley had, on every occasion, evinced: she could only suppose, with Charles, that passion had obscured his judgment; and, though he had severely suffered for this dereliction, she could not feel much sorrow for the misery in which his own conduct had involved him. For Captain Elmore's resentment, she generously made allowance, in consideration of the attachment he felt for Major Sedley; and, though convinced he would now take every pains in his power to weaken her influence over the mind of his friend, and banish her, if possible, from his remembrance, such was her tenderness, that she felt gratified in the conviction of his having a friend on whose affection he could so implicitly rely, for she could not resent injustice that merely sprung from enthusiastic regard.

Charles, she perceived by his manner, was offended by Captain Elmore's note; but, as he again renewed his promise of avoiding both gentlemen, and seemed proudly determined to evince the coolest indifference, she was re-

lieved from the uneasiness which the observation had at first excited.

This evening passed, as the preceding one, silently, and unsociably; but, as Mrs. Montague had mentioned to Miss Watkins and Fanny the present state of Sidney's affairs, and requested they would neither take any notice of her, nor make any remark on Sedley's absence, she was spared from sneers and insinuations she could so ill have endured. She, however, felt relieved, when permitted to retire to her room, where again reading Sedley's letter, and, recollecting the harsh reply she had been compelled to send him, resentment to his father, pride and fortitude, alike yielded to sorrow and to nature, and she wept incessantly during the remainder of the night.

She was completely separated from the only human being who had ever commanded her affections; from one who had won all the tenderness of which her soft and feeling heart was susceptible; and this was aggravated by the recollection that he would accuse her of harshness and cruelty in the reply she had

given to a letter which so painfully demonstrate the distressing conflict in Sedley's mind. His was not the language of romance, but the bitterness of disordered and overwrought feelings.

This reflection insensibly gave rise to another: would he so readily believe that she had, from her own inclination, answered him? Would he not naturally conclude that she had been compelled by her friends to act such a part? And would he, under such a conviction, tamely acquiesce in a sentence which he could not be perfectly satisfied was the result of her own deliberate choice? Yet, what purpose would any farther application answer? She had promised not to give any reply to his letters; and even, if she had not done so, a regard to her own dignity would compel her silence.

"We are for ever separated," cried she, in an agony of sorrow; "and that he should feel useless torture cannot mitigate mine; oh! no; to hear that he is happy is all that can now afford me consolation!"

Thus oppressed by sorrow, thus racked by restless impatience to hear how Sedley had borne her letter, what part he would act, or what would next ensue, sleep and rest were equal strangers, and she passed a night of feverish anxiety and hopeless regret.

CHAP. VI.

WITH a feeling of dejection, such as she had never before experienced, did Sidney rise in the morning, after a day of such cruel emotion. Ashamed at observing the excessive paleness of her countenance, and the heavy languor of her eyes, which must so palpably betray feelings that she ardently desired to confine to her own breast, she compelled herself to make an effort to disguise them: for she was aware that the malicious sneers, which would be eagerly thrown out would only augment her wretchedness, and enforce the necessity of locking up more closely her own thoughts.

On observing her look so ill, Mr. Montague was evidently displeased, and Charles was grieved; though neither took more than passing notice of her: nor did Mrs. Montague or Anna, though Miss Watkins and Fanny could not forbear exchanging glances of cold unfeeling contempt.

Eager to escape observation, yet dreading to confine herself to her own room, from an apprehension of seriously offending her uncle by conduct that would have been so galling to his pride, the moment breakfast was over Sidney retired to the adjacent room, and, taking out her drawing materials, endeavoured to devise some employment that would engage her attention, and enable her to escape the effort of keeping up any conversation. Though every attempt to confine her thoughts to her drawing was ineffectual; yet, as she was allowed to sit quiet and unmolested, it answered the purpose she intended.

Towards the middle of the day Colonel Coote and Mr. French were announced, and shewn into the room. Sidney's sensations almost rose to suffocation from a remembrance of how different had been her hopes and prospects the time they had last met, though only two days had elapsed since that period. After returning their salutation by a bow, she again bent her head over her drawing, and appeared too intently engaged to attend to the passing conversation.

Mr. Montague and Charles came into the room immediately after the two officers; when Mr. French, addressing himself to the former, said he had been charged with an apology from Elmore, for himself and Sedley, for omitting to pay a farewell visit at Belle Vue previous to their leaving the country; but Major Sedley had been called away so suddenly by business of importance, that they had scarcely time to make the necessary preparations for their journey.

Mr. Montague, perceiving this message had been sent by Captain Elmore for the purpose of deceiving Mr. French and Colonel Coote, and obviating any suspicions they might form from his and Major Sedley's omitting to visit at Belle Vue as usual, and concluding it probable that neither would return to C—— while his family remained in the country, felt his displeasure to both so far abated, that he with great politeness accepted the apology, equally anxious to obviate any sort of curiosity or surmise.

"I feel very apprehensive," cried Colonel Coote, "that some seriously-distressing oc-

currence has taken place in Sedley's family; for, though he obtained leave of absence some days ago, to pay a visit to General Sedley, it could not be for that purpose he left the country so suddenly; and Elmore gave me to understand, when he came this morning to request permission to accompany him, that he had received intelligence of a very unpleasant nature, and entreated I would not refuse to allow his attendance on his friend at a time he so peculiarly required his care: and this, indeed, I could not do, as there is no attention Sedley can receive he does not deserve; and it would have been cruel, under such circumstances, to have denied him the consolation of such a friend as Elmore."

"What he can have heard," said Mr. French, "I cannot conjecture; but, in my life, I never saw a man so changed as he was this morning when I shook hands with him as he was stepping into the carriage with Elmore. Yesterday, on casually hearing that he had not gone to bed the preceding night, I was going to see him, and inquire what had occurred to distress him,

when the man told me his master's positive orders to him were, not to admit any person to his room but Captain Elmore; and he passed the day perfectly alone till Elmore's return in the evening. The servant added that he had received several letters; and I suspect some of them must have been from his father, or his uncle, to announce intelligence peculiarly painful to his feelings."

"I am extremely sorry to hear it!" exclaimed Charles, with ready presence of mind, though excessively provoked at having such conversation pass in Sidney's presence; and not venturing to approach, from a dread of French's observation; but he was at the moment too much occupied by his own volubility to watch how his information was received, and from having no suspicion of the real cause of Sedley's uneasiness. Charles added, "Sedley may, perhaps, have been too easily alarmed; and I hope has not, any real cause for being so seriously concerned."

"I most sincerely hope so," replied Colonel Coote, "as every man who knows Sedley must feel interested in his welfare; but

though the peculiar warmth of his heart, and perhaps the romantic keenness of his feelings, must render him more sensible to misfortune than the generality of people would be, yet I fear no trifling occurrence, or causeless alarm, could have so seriously affected him; between him, however, and Elmore there is no reserve, and I felt pleasure in being in any degree enabled to mitigate his sufferings by permitting the absence of his friend without waiting for the usual forms."

Mr. and Mrs. Montague, feeling themselves called on to speak, expressed their sorrow at hearing this intelligence; Mrs. Montague with all that easy good breeding that must have convinced any person, unacquainted with the circumstances, that she was equally ignorant and uninterested on the subject.

Charles, from similar motives of prudence, and with a warmer sympathy in Sedley's feelings than he thought proper to betray, followed their example. Perceiving Sidney's agitation was so violent that she had all but fainted, and observing that French, having exhausted all the circumstances that he knew,

now felt some curiosity to see how she had received it, he walked carelessly over to the table at which she was sitting, and, pretending to look over some ornaments for screens, said, in a low voice, too low to be heard by any other person, " Endeavour to recover yourself, Sidney; French is on the watch:" then added, aloud, " Why don't you come here, Anna, and assist Sidney to put on this gold paper? She cannot do it by herself."

This call Anna understood, and coming over she stood completely before Sidney, talking with great rapidity, about the screens that were lying on the table; while Charles, joining Mr. French, so adroitly engaged his attention, that he soon forgot either to think of Major Sedley or to watch Sidney.

Mr. Montague exerting himself to converse on political subjects, which the news of the day rendered peculiarly interesting, no farther allusion was made to a subject, to which he could scarcely listen without betraying his impatience; though pleased at observing, by Colonel Coote's manner, as well as by Mr. French's,

that no suspicion was entertained of the occurrence which had driven Sedley from C——.

When sufficient time had elapsed to avoid the appearance of her being prompted by any peculiar motive, Mrs. Montague, carelessly addressing Anna, said, "Neither you nor Sidney have been out walking this morning, my dear; the day appears uncommonly fine, and, as you both dislike the carriage, had you not better go out now, and take a stroll?"

Sidney having busied herself for a few moments in arranging her papers, to obtain sufficient fortitude for the effort, wished the two gentlemen good morning, and retired, accompanied by Anna.

On reaching Sidney's room, Anna, after a few fruitless efforts at conversation, had the good nature to leave her to herself, to indulge, without restraint, the bitter tears which the recital of Sedley's sufferings had drawn forth. How profound must have been his love! How acute his feelings, when so totally unable to command sufficient fortitude even to attempt that disguise, which his pride, she thought,

would have prompted him to assume, whatever internal anguish he endured! Yet the effort had been wholly beyond him; and, for several hours after receiving her uncle's letter, it was evident that he had passed his time in a state of agitation and distraction so great, that by no eye but Elmore's could he endure to be observed. How many miserable hours had thus elapsed without even the consolation of pouring his sorrows into the bosom of a friend so anxious to sooth them, as from Mr. French she learned it had not been till late on the preceding evening that Captain Elmore had returned from the place whither he had been detached on the morning Mr. Sedley's letter had been received at Belle Vue. "Oh, surely," thought Sidney, "he has severely expiated the misconduct which his father has taken such cruel pains to punish!"

Her sorrow, thus violently awakened, thus severely augmented, by a description of sufferings which those who related had no view in detailing, nor could even guess their origin, she vainly sought to check, till nature at length

sunk under the continuance of such emotion, and she became calm because wholly exhausted.

A short time before dinner Anna came into the room with a message from Charles, requesting she would make an effort to recover her spirits and come down stairs, as he perceived his father was much displeased at her absenting herself from the drawing-room, and promising that he would take every pains to assist her through the evening by screening her from observation.

Grateful for his kindness and attention, Sidney determined to make the exertion he required, and accompanied Anna to the drawing-room. On observing her faded bloom and altered countenance, Mr. Montague looked exeedingly offended, but uttered no remarks on the subject. Charles and Anna mutually exerting themselves, she was spared from attempts to assume cheerfulness, which she could not by any effort have forced. Whatever anxiety Miss Watkins and Fanny felt to express their contempt and derision of her feelings, neither ventured a single comment; well aware, from Charles's conduct and man-

ner, that he would have retorted in a way which they did not wish to provoke.

During several succeeding days, Sidney's spirits continued in the same state of hopeless dejection; and, insensible to every effort which Charles, and, at his desire, and prompted by her own good nature, Anna also, made to enliven or entertain her, she spent every interval of solitude afforded her in tears; till, from this indulgence of unavailing sorrow, she was roused, by observing that her uncle was every day becoming more visibly and seriously displeased with her; that even the servants assiduously watched her; and that Miss Watkins and Fanny could no longer resist the opportunity of throwing out the most contemptuous sarcasms against her.

Her fortitude at length awakened by these reflections, the folly and impropriety of her conduct forcibly struck her. By no error, no misconduct of her own, had she incurred the misery she endured; and, however severe, it was common, unavoidable, and irremediable. Was it, then, consistent with religion, or with common sense, thus obstinately to re-

sign herself a prey to hopeless grief? Would it recall the past? would it influence the future?—No; it was directly contrary to her duty, repugnant to propriety, and incompatible with the dignity which her birth, her education, and her rank in society, demanded; and she determined to make a vigorous struggle, and, if possible, to attain that tranquillity, that resignation to the behests of Providence, which she felt herself so indispensably bound to acquire. Resolutely, therefore, she denied herself the melancholy consolation, in which she had hitherto indulged, of reading Sedley's letter, and bedewing his picture with her tears. To banish his remembrance wholly from her thoughts was impossible; but she endeavoured to avoid fixing it there in colours so vividly painful as to corrode the very springs of existence; and tried to acquire a reasonable composure by voluntarily becoming a party in the various excursions which Charles was continually contriving. The gratitude she felt for his and Anna's kindness not a little assisted her own endeavours, as the very wish of

proving it roused her to exertions she could not otherwise have made. She insensibly acquired a species of tranquillity, that, however remote from happiness, was at least more consistent with her sense of duty and propriety, than the violent and unrestrained effervescence of sorrow to which she had at first yielded herself; and the effort soon restored her to all Mr. Montague's kindness and affection.

Of Sedley, or from him, of which she had for some time entertained a vague expectation, she never heard. Colonel Coote and Mr. French visited as usual at Belle Vue; but whether from having discovered the cause of his leaving C——, or from beginning to suspect it, she could not determine, his name they never mentioned, nor was a single inquiry made respecting him. The observation that Colonel Coote delicately, and Mr. French with vigilant curiosity, watched her looks and manner, still farther prompted her to exertions so necessary to her peace, and so indispensably due to the jealous and insulted feelings of her family. The convic-

tion, that though resentment might have some place in Sedley's feelings, and would perhaps guide his present conduct, yet she experienced a sort of consolation in the hope that he would, when a little recovered from the first shock, acquit her of intentional unkindness, and remember her at least with esteem.

CHAP. VII.

Mr. Montague receiving letters from his law agent, urging the imperative necessity of his and Sidney's immediate presence in town, to have letters of guardianship taken out, and to commence proceedings for the recovery of her property, which young Hamilton's being now of age would enable them to make, he gave orders for immediate preparations for removing thither. Guided equally by a wish of superintending the law-suit, and a desire to leave the country before Major Sedley should again return to C——, he determined though contrary to his usual custom, to pass his Christmas in Dublin.

This arrangement was not perfectly satisfactory to Mrs. Montague, who did not like going to town till the commencement of the fashionable winter; but, as opposition was useless, the day decided to begin the journey

was about a month subsequent to Sedley's departure.

The morning previous to that fixed on, Sidney, who had not seen Mrs. Enesy during this period, accompanied Charles to Mount Enesy, to pay her a farewell visit. They mutually agreed to assign business as the cause of her late inattention; which the well-known lawsuit she was engaged in, and about which she was going to town, might render a feasible excuse; at least it would preclude inquiries that she neither wished to hear nor answer.

This apology Mrs. Enesy received with the utmost kindness, treating Sidney with even more than her former affection; and though the alteration in her looks and manner was too obvious to escape her observation, she made not a single comment on the subject, but conversed wholly on indifferent topics; and, though Mrs. Enesy expressed her regret at the loss of her society, she said she felt pleasure at the prospect which her going to Dublin afforded of being equally productive of amusement and advantage.

Sidney was surprised at Mrs. Enesy's expressing no sort of displeasure at her apparent neglect, and highly gratified, not only in finding her friendship undiminished, but by her proposing to enter into a regular correspondence. Whether she did or did not suspect what had passed, was a matter of comparative indifference; for that it had occurred gave her too deep, too settled, a depression of spirits, to permit her to view any trivial addition of uneasiness as a subject of more than momentary concern.

It was arranged that Charles, Sidney, and Anna, should travel together in Mrs. Montague's barouche; and the rest of the family in the travelling coach; as Charles committed the care of bringing up his curricle and horses to his servant, that he might be at liberty to attend the ladies.

Sidney felt an undefinable relief in quitting a spot where she had endured so much misery; earnestly hoping, that, before she again returned, she should be better able than she had yet been to tranquillize her spirits; her last employment before she quitted her room

being to offer up a fervent prayer to Heaven for resignation to her fate.

Eager and impatient in all his movements, the moment breakfast was over Charles hurried Sidney and Anna into the carriage, declaring, that if they waited for the remainder of the party, they would be detained half the day, as Fanny was always so intolerably slow in her preparations for a journey, and had so many frivolous things to arrange of which no other person would think.

"Pray, my dear Charles," cried Anna, laughing, "what speed shall we make by setting out before them, when we are all to dine and sleep at the same inn together?"

"Not a great deal, to be sure," replied he; but it may hasten Fanny, and will at least enable us to escape her tormenting caprices and contradictory orders."

Anna, delighted at the prospect of spending a winter in Dublin, without the restraint of a governess, and hoping, through Charles's interference, to accomplish her long-desired wish of being introduced into public, and thus, in some measure, becoming her own

mistress, gave way to the most extravagant spirits; and Charles, who seldom required much incitement to exhilarate his, readily joined in her mirth, which, though it could avail little towards alleviating Sidney's deep-rooted sorrow, yet it amused, without oppressing her, as they suffered her to preserve the silence she preferred.

They had not travelled far, when Charles, growing extremely weary of confinement and of that inactivity, he of all other things peculiarly disliked, got out of the carriage, and found the desired employment in driving, which he did with a velocity that the coachman vainly endeavoured to restrain, and that attracted the observation of the passengers, till, the traces of one of the leading horses giving way, he was obliged to stop, to have it repaired.

A man, who was walking after the carriage, hastened forward to assist the servants to put the traces in order; and, while thus employed, said to Charles, with an arch smile, "I hope your honour is not bent on running away with

either of these handsome young ladies, that you seem in such desperate haste."

"You have just guessed the fact, my honest fellow," cried Charles, "and I don't intend to check the reins again till I get to Port Patrick. Scotland, you know, is a famous place for tying a hard knot without much ceremony."

"If your honour never pulls reins till you get to Port Patrick," replied the man, drily, "I fear you will be likely to have *old Nick* for your pilot."

"Perhaps you have travelled the road before, my good fellow," exclaimed Charles, "since you seem to know the way so well."

"No, sir," replied the man, coolly, "we poor folks are content to leave that snug berth for the quality; and I believe they find it an easier matter to get there than to get back."

"Thank you for your information," cried Charles, gaily; then, giving him some money to recompense him for his trouble, added, "Take this, and drink my health and safe arrival at the destined port."

"With all my heart, and welcome, sir," said the man, bowing; "but, if I may make so free as to advise your honour, I would recommend it to you to try some pleasanter voyage."

"What!" exclaimed Charles, laughing, "an Irishman, and not like the port of matrimony!"

"Oh, no, by your leave, sir, I meant no such thing," said the man, bowing, "I only meant the *old gentleman's* quarters. Those I would be sorry to see you bent on beating up; for, upon my soul, sir," added he, earnestly, "you don't seem cut out for them."

"Not quite, I hope," cried Charles; "nor do I intend to make the experiment."

Then, lashing the horses, he renewed his speed, and arrived without farther delay at the inn; where they were not joined for several hours by the remainder of the family, to Charles's infinite annoyance; for, after travelling with a degree of rapidity that set the horses in a foam, he could find no other amusement, at the end of his journey, than strolling through the rooms of the inn, and reading the

various efforts at wit with which the panes of glass and chimney-pieces abounded.

The remainder of the evening passed off heavily: as Fanny was in excessive ill humour at not meeting the same accommodations at an humble inn, in a country village, to which she was accustomed at her father's house, and relieved her own uneasiness by expatiating on her feelings to those who were compelled to listen to her querulous and wearisome complaints.

The next morning, while Sidney was dressing, Anna came into her room with a face full of meaning, and said, "I have learned a piece of intelligence, Sidney, which I thought you would like to hear, and which I have hurried in to tell you."

"What can it be," cried Sidney, involuntarily sighing, "that can now give me pleasure?"

"It will not give you any pleasure," said Anna, "farther than by giving you some information of Sedley, about whom you were so desirous to hear, and by convincing you how much the late transactions have affected him."

Sidney, too anxious to reply, remained silent; and Anna continued: "When Thomson came in this morning to dress Fanny, by way of amusing her, she was giving her all the news she had been enabled to pick up among the inn people; and, among the rest, told her one of the chamber-maids had informed her that a Major Sedley, from C——, accompanied by another gentleman, had come to this inn about a month ago: that the Major had been so ill they had been obliged to assist him from the carriage; and he had been two days confined to his bed before he was able to continue his journey: that the other gentleman, who was of course Elmore, had never left him a moment during his stay, and had seemed very impatient to get away, though Major Sedley had wished to remain some time longer; but she believed, he had been more in grief than ill health, as he had appeared very well able to travel the morning they went off. Thomson, I see, suspects something of what has passed, and gave several indirect hints of her curiosity, which Fanny did not choose to understand, and seemed an-

noyed by the whole story, telling her very peevishly not to tease her any more with such nonsense; from all which I conclude she was fearful of my gratifying your vanity by mentioning the circumstance."

"My vanity," said Sidney, unable to restrain her tears, "can never be gratified by hearing of poor Sedley's sufferings."

"Oh, no," cried Anna, eagerly, "I did not mean any thing so unfeeling or ill-natured; I only mentioned the circumstance, to convince you how truly he loved you; and, you know, if you both remain constant, you may yet be married: stranger things happen every day. You will be your own mistress when your fortune is recovered, as I hope it soon will be: and, when old Sedley moves off to another world, as I dare say he will soon, you and Sedley may, if you please, marry; and it was to give you this bit of consolation that I was so eager to tell you what I had heard."

The good nature that prompted the communication forbade Sidney to resent the levity that accompanied it; and, though it had at first a very opposite effect from what

Anna intended, by cruelly depressing her spirits with the renewed sorrow which the account of Sedley's grief occasioned, yet, when the first agony of her feelings subsided, she involuntarily dwelt on the hope Anna had awakened. For if she recovered her fortune, the embarrassed state of which, she concluded, was Mr. Sedley's real objection to the union, though a desire to punish his son had induced him to convey his disapprobation in such gross terms, he might then be induced to make such an apology to Mr. Montague as would atone for the past.

The extravagance of Mr. Montague's pride, however, rendered this rather an illusive hope than a ràtional and well-founded expectation: though generously and tenderly alive to Major Sedley's present sufferings, and ardently desirous that he might so far recover his spirits as to enjoy happiness, she could not wish him to forget her, nor could she resolve to banish the hope which Anna had thus suggested, that they might yet be united with the consent of their mutual friends; and this hope tended more to tranquillize her

spirits, and to whisper peace to her heart, than all the pious fortitude she had so assiduously laboured to attain.

Immediately after breakfast the whole party again set forward on their journey, and arrived at past six o'clock at Mr. Montague's house in Merrion-square.

CHAP. VIII.

For a few days after their arrival in town the Montagues lived entirely alone, occupied in arranging the domestic economy of their house, and preparing it for the reception of the few friends who were in town at so early a period of the season; and where, as at Belle Vue, they kept up a constant intercourse with every family to whom they were known.

Among the first of those who came to visit them on their arrival was Mrs. Talbot, a lady with whom Mrs. Montague had long been intimate, and one of the most fashionable of her acquaintance.

This lady expressed the pleasure she felt at seeing Mrs. Montague and Fanny, in terms of elaborate politeness, though not very particular in her attention to either Miss Watkins or Anna, and taking no other notice of Sidney than merely returning the curtsey of introduction.

There was a fashionable ease, almost bordering on assurance, in her manners; and, whatever point she wished to carry, no motives of delicacy she seemed to consider of sufficient weight to withhold her : she was, however, extremely high in the estimation of the fashionable world, and gave the most splendid and numerous parties of any woman of her rank and fortune.

Previous to her taking leave she mentioned to Mrs. Montague that her brother, Sir Townly Beauchamp, had at length returned from England, where he had almost constantly resided, and was now determined to settle on his estate in Ireland. She added, that he had a great desire to be known to the Montague family; and she hoped for the pleasure of introducing him at a party she would soon try to form for their entertainment. So few fashionables however were yet in town, that she feared they would find it rather dull; and concluded by saying she must have their promise to keep themselves disengaged for the earliest evening which she might be enabled to fix.

This invitation Mrs. Montague readily accepted, and politely thanked Mrs. Talbot for taking so much trouble for their amusement; agreeing with her that they must try to make parties among their few friends in town till after Christmas, as Mr. Montague had been obliged to leave the country so early on business.

Mrs. Talbot said she was delighted that any occurrence had hastened the arrival of such dear friends, and then took her leave.

In the course of the ensuing day cards arrived from Mrs. Talbot to the family in general, and to Miss Watkins, Sidney, and Charles, in particular; fixing her party for the middle of the following week.

As the Miss Montagues had been written on the card Anna asked Charles if he thought her mother would permit her to go; for that if she had no objection to doing so, Mrs. Talbot had certainly included her in the invitation.

"Why should you suppose she would have any objection?" replied Charles: "have you not always accompanied my mother to every

party, since you were emancipated from the school-room?"

"Oh yes," said Anna, eagerly, "because you have always interfered, and insisted on my being brought out; but that, you know, was in the country; and Fanny says I can't go out in town, until after I am presented."

"Fanny is certainly well versed in fashionable knowledge," exclaimed Charles; "but, neither has Sidney been presented, and as you will both, I suppose, make your appearance at the first drawing-room, I cannot see what objection my mother could have to taking you to so small a party as Mrs. Talbot will be able to muster at this season of the year."

"My mamma did not tell me she had any such intention," cried Anna, "nor do I believe she will allow me to go to Mrs. Talbot's; but perhaps, if you ask her, she would agree to both; and you know I should not like to make such a proposal myself."

"Well, well," said Charles, laughing, "I will try my interest for the latter; but to the Castle you shall go at all events, if only as a reward for your present ingenuity."

Anna thanked him for his invariable kindness, and said he could not wonder she should dislike to spend her winter evenings shut up with Miss Watkins, who was fifty times more disagreeable than any of her governesses had been.

"If my aunt will not permit you to go, Anna," said Sidney, "I will stay at home; for to my going there the same objection must be made. But, in my present circumstances, and, till it is finally settled whether I am to have any fortune, I have no desire to make my appearance at court."

"Sidney," cried Charles, without appearing to understand why she was so indifferent to making her *debût* in public, "you must permit me to say that you are not acting wisely in suffering your spirits to be so much depressed about that confounded lawsuit. I tell you we will put the whole artillery of the law in force against the Hamiltons, and I trust that truth and justice will be a match for fraud and chicanery: so at the Castle I am determined you shall make your immediate appearance preparatory to your bursting forth in full

splendour on the astonished beaux and belles of Dublin, the admiration of the one, and the envy of the other. Now set both your little hearts at rest, and put all your charms in the best array, to make your first onset at Mrs. Talbot's, where you may rest assured of meeting every sprig of fashion that can be collected in this deserted town, and unpropitious season."

For the hint, thus delicately conveyed, to endeavour to recover her spirits Sidney felt grateful, though perfectly indifferent to all the pleasures that could be offered to her; while Anna, transported at the success of her efforts to engage Charles as her champion in a cause in which she did not dare to avow her wishes except to himself and Sidney, thanked him with such rapture as provoked his laughter, though it confirmed his determination of procuring the accomplishment of what she so ardently desired.

The entrance of Mr. Montague put an end to the conversation. He told Sidney that she must on the following day accompany him to the Court of Chancery, to go through the ne-

cessary form of choosing him as her guardian, preparatory to his commencing the lawsuit against the Hamiltons, and for which purpose every necessary arrangement was already made: adding, that Counsellor Ingram, of whose abilities he had the highest opinion, had, after a mature consideration of all the papers and documents laid before him, given it as his decided opinion that her title to the property was undoubted, and that her rights must be very speedily ascertained and restored, as young Hamilton was of age.

Information so encouraging to her feelings, and to her still cherished hopes of an union with the beloved object of her affections, Sidney heard with undisguised pleasure; thanking her uncle for his kindness, and his care of her interests, in terms so affectionate, and with such warmth of manner, as extremely to gratify him. Then, recollecting her near relationship to the Hamiltons, she asked him if he had any objection to her paying a visit to her aunt Hamilton, with whom she had occasionally corresponded since her father's death,

and who had always, not only expressed much sorrow at the unfortunate though unavoidable opposition of interests existing between her and her son, but, a hope that they would not influence her to decline an intimacy whenever circumstances put it into her power; for, though unable to induce her son to yield up his claims to a property which he considered so just, that need not deprive her of the society of a beloved neice.

"If it is your own wish," replied Mr. Montague, "I have not the least objection, though, for myself, I must absolutely decline any intimacy with a family whom I disliked, even previous to their unjust claims to a property which they knew was never intended for them. One caution, however, I must give you, which is, totally to avoid any conversation on business, as it might lead to consequences of which you are little aware: and, if Mrs. Hamilton expresses any displeasure at your silence, ascribe it to my positive desire that you do not interfere. Your actions, I am not ignorant, are invalid; but from an

unguarded conversation she might gather information that would be useful to their fraudulent intentions."

Of this injunction Sidney promised a strict observance; and though, from the natural integrity and candour of her own disposition, she was inclined to hope that he spoke with prejudice of Mrs. Hamilton, yet perfectly sensible of the kind motives that prompted his advice, she determined not to put her own judgment in competition with that of a man so well acquainted with the world, and to whose authority she had already yielded implicit, though unwilling, obedience, in an affair to which property, or any pecuniary coniderations, were indeed, but of little comparative importance.

The next morning she accompanied Mr. Montague to the Courts, and was there introduced to Counsellor Ingram. He appeared turned of forty; gentleman-like, though rather formal in his air and address; and with a something disagreeably precise and consequential in his manners.

He was a man of large fortune and good family, and extremely intimate with Mr. Montague, to whom he made many apologies for so constantly declining his invitations since his coming to town, assuring him that business of consequence had occupied every moment of his time. To Sidney, he addressed himself with studied politeness, and congratulated her on the pleasing aspect of her affairs, declaring that no attention or vigilance on his part should be spared to restore her to the possession of her estate.

Though gratified by his assurances of success, Sidney could scarcely repress an involuntary feeling of dislike which his affected manners excited; but, forcing herself to thank him, and to express her reliance on his attention to her interests, she accompanied him and Mr. Montague into the Court of Chancery.

Here her business was in a few moments completed; and Mr. Montague then telling her, that, if she wished to pay a visit to Mrs. Hamilton, she might now do so, as he would

return in Mr. Ingram's carriage, she ordered the coachman to drive to Rutland-square, where Mrs. Hamilton resided.

On sending in her name she was admitted, and for the first time within her remembrance saw Mrs. Hamilton and her two daughters: both her sons, she said, were from home.

Mrs. Hamilton was civil, and endeavoured to be affectionate; but there was a chilling formality, joined to a studied flattery, almost bordering on servility, in her manner, that extremely disgusted Sidney, and impressed her with an instant conviction of how little Mr. Montague had been guided by prejudice in the contempt and dislike he had so openly declared he felt for her.

The Miss Hamiltons were at once coldly repulsive and fashionably indifferent; they addressed Sidney by the formal name of Miss Montague; and they evidently disdained to consider her dispute with their brother as deserving of their notice.

After some general and common-place conversation, Mrs. Hamilton asked Sidney how long she had been in town.

She replied, a week.

"A week!" cried Mrs. Hamilton, either surprised, or affecting to be so: "is it possible my dear Sidney could be a week in town, without coming to see me?"

"My time has been so much occupied," replied Sidney, colouring at the recollection that she had totally forgotten there were such people in existence, "that I could not till this day spare a single hour, or I should have been happy to have waited on you sooner."

"Ah," cried Mrs. Hamilton, "that reminds me of what I wish I could forget, the unfortunate dispute subsisting between you and Fortescue. But now, my dear Sidney, let me as a common friend observe, that I think you very wrong in rejecting, or rather indeed, I suppose in allowing Mr. Montague to reject, Fortescue's offer of compromising the affair, by giving you such a sum of money as he could afford, on your relinquishing all farther claims to the property: for I assure you, and I have the best authority for saying so, he is the right heir; and Mr. Forbes had not the slightest power to bequeath it. For-

tescue, poor fellow! would have been delighted to have made a proper provision for you, on your giving up a lawsuit, which, though expensive to him for the present, he must ultimately succeed in gaining."

"That, ma'am," cried Sidney, forcing a smile, though offended both by Mrs. Hamilton's speech, and mention of the subject, "is a point I am not adequate to determine."

"It is, I may say, almost determined already," replied Mrs. Hamilton; "I assure you, Fortescue has had the very first opinions in his favour. I do not wonder that you should reluctantly yield a claim which your father, poor man! took such pains to convince you was just, and which your uncle persists in enforcing; but your own excellent understanding, my dear Sidney, must now render you a very competent judge, as I am convinced your good heart and principles will a very impartial one, of how vain it is to contend against the opinions of the best lawyers, particularly as Fortescue is the natural, as well as lawful, heir of his uncle Forbes. How much better, then, for you to accept Fortescue's pro-

posal, who would think it cruel to deprive you of a property you have been taught, though I must say foolishly, to consider as your own, without making a competent provision for you. He has too good a heart to act so ungenerously, unless irritated by useless opposition; and then I cannot answer for him."

Sidney, equally offended and disgusted at the mixture of art, flattery, and threat, conveyed in this speech, coldly replied, "This is a subject on which I must beg leave to decline speaking; I am no judge of it, and will not interfere with my uncle, who, as my guardian, will act as he pleases, as I should ever wish to live on friendly terms with my mother's family, and with such very near relations, I must persist in uniformly avoiding this topic."

Mrs. Hamilton, with an instant change of countenance, asked, "if Mr. Montague had taken out letters of guardianship?"

To this inquiry Sidney hesitated to reply, recollecting her uncle's positive injunction to avoid the smallest conversation on the subject of her lawsuit; but aware that Mrs.

Hamilton must in a few days hear the circumstance, and disliking to refuse answering a simple question, she coldly replied he had done so that morning.

Mrs. Hamilton was silent for a few moments, as if hesitating what part to act; and Sidney, indignant at her conduct, was rising to take leave; when her aunt again assuming the constrained kindness she had manifested on her entrance, entreated her farther stay, assuring her that, let affairs take what turn they would between her and Fortescue, she should ever feel pleasure in her visits; and that, if her advice had any weight, he would consent to submit the property in dispute to the arbitration of lawyers: but young men choose to think and act for themselves; and he was not much disposed to yield up the privileges of his sex.

Sidney, though surprised at this assertion after the preceding conversation, made no further reply; and Mrs. Hamilton found it necessary to introduce more general subjects, on which her daughters, who had hitherto remained silent, condescended to

converse, though in a style of fashionable and selfish arrogance, intended to impress Sidney with a belief of their infinite superiority.

Wearied by the whole party, Sidney did not prolong her visit beyond the moment she could prevail on Mrs. Hamilton to suffer her to depart, who would not permit her to leave till she had first promised to become a frequent and friendly visitor; though, as she did not choose to visit any of the Montague family, who, she lamented, had always treated her extremely ill, she must limit her own attentions to sending in her tickets at the door; but, under such circumstances, her dear Sidney would wave ceremony.

On the first opportunity that occurred, Mr. Montague desired from Sidney a particular relation of Mrs. Hamilton's conduct during her visit; which she gave, though without confessing her own sentiments.

"Mrs. Hamilton," said Mr. Montague, smiling contemptuously, "should recollect Lord Lyttleton's adage, 'A cunning woman is a knavish fool.' She thinks herself very clever,

and that, because she has the inclination, she will also have the power to deceive. If I cannot compel her son to act justly, I shall not leave you to depend on his bounty, which, if he thought you required it, would never have been offered; and the very mode she has taken to convince you of his kindness and generosity is precisely what convinces me of their fraudulent intentions, and his doubts of the success of their plans. He would, perhaps, rather give up a few thousands at once, than run the risk of in obtaining the surrender of a property he hopes to secure as his own, from your inability to wrest it from him; but he and his mother will find themselves mistaken. Had I any hesitation in my own mind of the justice of your cause, I might, for your sake, consent to such an arbitration as would best serve you; but, as that is not the case, I never will; and Charles also solemnly protests, that, if I should not survive to see it settled, he will carry on the suit to the last, and compel justice, however tardy. Let not this declaration distress you, my dear Sidney," continued he, observing

tears swell into her eyes; "I hope and trust; that I shall long survive your restoration to your just and rightful property, nor shall I injure myself by serving you. Your fortune is sufficiently good to answer the expenses of regaining it, and afterwards to leave you nobly provided for; as, even should each party be obliged to bear their own expenses, the accumulation of the rents of a clear five hundred a year will amply reimburse you."

Sidney, with sincere gratitude, thanked Mr. Montague for such warm, and parental kindness. She then asked if he had any objection to her keeping the promise which Mrs. Hamilton had extorted, of visiting her frequently; adding, that if he disapproved of her so doing, she should not have much merit in retracting it, as, though she thought there could be no impropriety in the intercoure, it was by no means agreeable.

"How happy it makes me, my dear girl," said Mr. Montague affectionately, "to find your conduct on every occasion so perfectly consistent with the good sense which I have ever

considered you to possess, and the conviction of which makes me rather wish you to continue on civil, though distant, terms with the Hamiltons. Confiding in your prudence, I would, for the sake of appearances, prefer your going there, although I well know their motive is to glean, through you, a knowledge of the measures which we intend to pursue, that they may have the earliest information, and best means of defeating them. But I will take care to foil them, as to your lawyers alone will I speak; for, whatever confidence I feel in your discretion, I should be extremely sorry to consider you as a fit competitor for Mrs. Hamilton in the arts of deception and dissimulation."

The zealous and benevolent tenderness, of Mr. Montague's behaviour on this occasion, wholly obliterated from Sidney's mind a sort of inclination to resent his injurious suspicions of Sedley, and the extreme harshness with which he had compelled her to act towards him. A candid review of that transaction taught her to allow for the irritation of his

feelings, and she could not help acknowledging that, if he demanded the obedience of a daughter, he fully deserved it, by shewing her a parent's care and affection, obscured alone by those errors to which a parent would have been equally liable.

CHAP. IX.

In pursuance of Charles's promise to Anna, he not only asked his mother to take her to Mrs. Talbot's, but at the same time declared his wish, as if entirely from himself, that she should be that winter presented at the castle, and introduced into the fashionable world.

Mrs. Montague, however unwilling to disoblige her son, would not give a decided answer to his request without first consulting her eldest daughter.

Fanny had hoped, through Anna's means, to prevent Sidney making her appearance in public that winter, as she dreaded the idea of introducing to the world, under such favourable auspices, a rival who had proved so formidable, by winning the affections of the only man she had ever felt a very decided wish to attract. This disappointment of her vanity, with the conviction it unwillingly forced on

her mind that Sedley considered Sidney's merit to be not only far greater than hers, but even a full counterpoise for her decided advantages of fortune, still rankled deeply in her breast: and though pride had induced her to conceal this feeling under an appearance of derision for love-sick folly, she was now immeasurably provoked with Charles for his interference. Nor was envy of Sidney her only motive for vexation at this proposal: Anna, she was conscious, was her superior in personal beauty; and she by no means relished the idea of a second competitor for public attention in her own family, and on a spot which she had concluded would ultimately settle her own future rank in the world. At Belle Vue she was comparatively indifferent; and, though ill nature and a tyrannical disposition had prompted her to induce her mother to deny Anna the gratification of visiting among her friends till Charles's urgency overpowered her opposition, she had merely acquiesced from not thinking a single person who inhabited the country worthy of aspiring to her hand; and, therefore, to Anna's charms they might,

if they pleased, bow captive. Estimating herself far beyond the degree of consequence to which even her birth and fortune entitled her, she had rejected with disdain all the offers which had been made since her first appearance in public; but the galling lesson which Sedley had first taught her, that every person did not value her by the same standard, led her seriously to consider the danger she ran of overvaluing her advantages, and thus suffering herself to be despised by those she had ever regarded as so far her inferiors; and she had come to town with a decided resolution of that winter regaining her lost ground, and using the opportunities she had hitherto slighted of establishing herself in the world. What, then, was her indignation at a proposal, that not only included the public appearance of Sidney, that hated rival, the state of whose fortune she hoped would have precluded such a step, but that of a sister also, so well known to be many years younger than herself; and this too before she began to develop her plans? With vehemence she therefore declared her

utter disapprobation of Anna's being presented till she was of age, saying that no person ever thought of such a proceeding with a second daughter; and that she had concluded that Sidney and Anna would have remained at home, under the care of her aunt Watkins, till they could with tolerable propriety make their appearance in public.

On finding her eldest daughter so decidedly averse to the proposal, Mrs. Montague gave, though unwillingly, an absolute refusal to her son's request. Charles, excessively piqued at finding Fanny's influence superior to his own with his mother, instantly applied to his father, entreating him to state his opinion on the subject.

This Mr. Montague did in very explicit terms. Prudence, he said, must enforce Sidney's public appearance, to convince the world that her family entertained no doubt of her being able to support that rank in society to which she was so justly entitled. With respect to Anna, as she was but a few months younger than Sidney, it was his wish they should be presented together; that such a

restraint he never could permit on Miss Watkins's time, nor was the proposal a proper one to make to her; and that, as Anna's governess had so long left her, it would be absurd to think of engaging another, and equally improper to permit her to reside in town without some person's care, unless publicly appearing under her mother's protection, and in her society. He must request that no farther opposition should be given to a step which he not only considered as proper, but which he had concluded Mrs. Montague intended to take when she had suffered Anna to remain without a governess, during the summer, at Belle Vue.

Fanny's anger and disappointment, at hearing her father's opinion so decidedly contradictory to her wishes and her schemes, were unbounded; but to submit she was compelled, as Mrs. Montague never, in any instance, opposed the avowed wishes of her husband; and as she could not, without betraying her views, have entered into a contest in which she might not have ultimately proved victorious, when totally unsupported. For Miss Watkins, was deeply offended at the proposal

which Fanny, without even consulting her, had made in her name, and forgetting the prudence that had so long restrained her, on finding herself seconded by Mr. Montague and Charles, she openly declared her opinion in favour of the propriety of Sidney and Anna being presented together, at the ensuing drawing-room. Fanny's ill humour at her defeat was violent, but useless; and it was finally determined that the girls should forthwith prepare for their *debût*.

This arrangement, so delightful to Anna, but so uninteresting to Sidney, exposed them, both, to Fanny's unrestrained malevolence, and to Mrs. Montague's severe, though silent, displeasure; and though to neither Mr. Montague nor Charles she evinced any disapprobation, she treated them with extreme harshness. For Fanny persuaded her that Sidney was the person whose artful management of Charles had induced his active interference; and she again excited the suspicion of her wish to enthral his affections, as she was disappointed in her hopes of an union with Sedley: This idea, the comparative tran-

quillity which the secretly-indulged hope of being yet united to Sedley had produced in Sidney's mind, rendered to her prejudiced imagination but too probable, and she again relapsed into all her former cold reserve; nor was she even so politely guarded in her manner as formerly, from the increased dislike, anger, and jealousy, this renewed suspicion produced.

The observation of this change in Mrs. Montague gave Sidney very great uneasiness, as she had begun to feel that grateful affection which her late kindness had been so well calculated to inspire. Imputing it to the influence of Fanny's dissatisfaction at the late arrangement, she endeavoured to allay her displeasure by respectful attention, and thus escaped the mortification she would have endured had she been able to read all the motives that guided Mrs. Montague's conduct.

Anna was well prepared to meet her mother's displeasure, which she regarded as a matter of very little importance, considering the accomplishment of her favourite plan as an ample compensation; and, though her dread of offending either Charles or her father rendered

her rather circumspect in her conduct, it could not produce any change in her feelings, which had long taught her to view her mother in any other light than that of an impartial parent.

Anxious to atone to his mother for the uneasiness which he had felt himself obliged to give her, Charles employed all his endearing arts to restore her to good humour; and, though vexed by her behaviour to Sidney and Anna, it did not lessen the desire of regaining his wonted place in her confidence, though he thought it prudent to pass over the subject in total silence. On this, as on every occasion in which they had come in decided collision with each other, Mrs. Montague's affection for Charles prevailed over the ascendancy of Fanny; and she could not long refrain from him lavishing on him her usual tenderness; but no effort of hers could induce Fanny to forgive the part he had acted; and though a dread of his sarcasms, which she had found so galling, restrained her from encountering them, she behaved to him with cold and repulsive rudeness, which he received and returned with contemptuous indifference.

In consequence of the above decision Sidney and Anna accompanied Mrs. Montague to Mrs. Talbot's. As they were ascending the stairs, Charles, drawing a hand of each under his arm, jocosely exclaimed, "As neither of you have yet made your public entrée at the castle, you cannot expect to know or to be known by, perhaps, a single individual of this party; nor will Fanny, I suspect, be very likely to forward your introduction to any of her acquaintance; I must, therefore, take you under my special protection, as you will meet a very different reception, hanging on the arm of the well-known heir of Belle Vue, to that you would receive if left to saunter by yourselves round Mrs. Talbot's splendid rooms."

"Really, Charles," cried Anna, laughing, "you have a tolerable share of vanity: I did not suspect that the Dublin air was so infectious, or that you knew so well how to rate your own claims to public attention."

"I hope," exclaimed he, "you don't suspect that I am such a blockhead or a novice as not to be very capable of estimating the

value I ought to place on attentions of which I so well understand the motive. Believe me, my dear, the unmarried heir of a good estate, though ugly, old, stupid, foolish, or even vicious, is not an object to be passed unnoticed by calculating young ladies, or managing matrons. You, however, can know nothing of all this: my mother," added he, proudly, "could not teach what she never learnt; and, therefore, her daughters must trust to their own merits and advantages for success."

Anna made no reply, as they were at the entrance of the reception-room. The Montagues were received by Mrs. Talbot with the same profusion of complimentary adulation that she had bestowed on the day of her morning visit; and Sidney and Anna had instant conviction, from the change in her manners to both, that young ladies hanging on the arm "of the heir of Belle Vue" were not to be passed by with total inattention, as she was pointedly polite to each; though Charles received her compliments with a degree of indifference that rather too plainly proved he knew how to appreciate her civilities.

In a few moments after their entrance Sir Townly Beauchamp approached, and was, by his sister, introduced to the whole Montague family, as one extremely desirous of being honoured with their friendship.

Sir Townly's figure, appearance, and manners, excited the observation and attention of the whole family to whom he was thus presented, and to whom he seemed extremely desirous to recommend himself. He was far beyond the common height, and equally remarkable for a look and stride of proud defiance. He had very much the air and address of a man of fashion, though shaded by an affectation of notoriety, that seemed to consider his notice an honour to which few were entitled. His features had once been remarkable for their beauty, though now disfigured by a bloated, drowsy, yet acrimonious expression of countenance, that gave him a look of age which his years did not justify. Unbounded dissipation had proved equally prejudicial to his character and fortune as to his appearance; but as he had resided in England since his coming of

age, very little was known of him by his Irish friends and acquaintance.

With Mr. Montague and Charles Sir Townly conversed for some time on the fashionable topics of the day, and then attended Charles's party to a seat at some distance; whither Fanny, induced by the desire of attracting the notice of a man of such apparent celebrity, also accompanied them.

Sir Townly quickly perceiving, by Charles's manner of replying to the remarks he made on England, that he knew very little of that kingdom from personal observation, and still less of London, concluded it would be no difficult task to impress him with a proper sense of his own consequence and superiority in that celebrated mart of fashion and dissipation. He, therefore, displayed such airs of insolence, and related so many anecdotes tending to illustrate his own importance, interspersed with various strictures calculated to force on him a consciousness of his ignorance of fashionable life and the *beau monde*, from a hope that he would gladly put

himself under the tuition of so perfect an adept, that Charles, offended at his insolence, and disgusted by his vanity, suddenly rose and told his sisters that he wished to take a turn round the room.

Very different was the impression made on Fanny's mind by Sir Townly Beauchamp. Ignorant of the scenes and people about whom he conversed, for the first time in her life she felt as an inferior in knowledge on those subjects on which she peculiarly prided herself; and, dazzled by the lustre of the titles Sir Townly gave to men he declared his most intimate friends, she yielded implicit confidence to all his assertions. Flattered too by the desire he shewed of conversing with her, while of Sidney and Anna he took not the slightest notice, and far from feeling offended at the consequence he arrogated a right to assume, she felt disposed to pay the same blind adulation to his presumption that she had ever insolently demanded to her own.

Sir Townly, quickly perceiving his advantage, was not slow in turning it to the purpose for which he had originally designed his intro-

duction to the Montague family,—a wish to relieve his pressing embarrassments by the possession of her independent fortune, which Mrs. Talbot with great readiness determined to use all her art and influence to procure him; feeling no repugnance to sacrifice the daughter of her *best friend* to a man of broken fortunes and ruined character, because that man chanced to be her brother, and therefore his splendor or disgrace must reflect some portion at least of their rays on herself.

Scarcely had Charles proceeded half round the room, when his attention was attracted by the entrance of a young man in deep mourning, to whom he quickly advanced, and with eager pleasure, addressing him by the name of Savage, introduced him to Sidney and Anna as the friend he had so anxiously expected at Belle Vue the preceding summer.

Mr. Savage's sable dress was worn for the death of his father, which had taken place a few months before, leaving him uncontrolled master of an ample fortune. He was a young man of good family, and prepossessing appearance; very fashionable in his manners

and address, though both were tinctured by a slight degree of haughtiness, even to his most intimate friends.

His pleasure at seeing Charles, with whom he had been very intimate at college, appeared equally lively with his own; and the whole party immediately sate down on the opposite side of the room to that where Sir Townly and Fanny still continued; when a general and animated conversation took place, as Mr. Savage seemed desirous of recommending himself to the sister and cousin of his friend.

Conscious of the impropriety of going into public, there to display dejection that must infallibly subject her to pointed remarks, Sidney endeavoured to force her spirits, and converse with ease; and, though she could not assume sprightliness, yet, to those who had not known her previous to her unfortunate acquaintance with Major Sedley, she merely appeared endued with great, though rather melancholy, sweetness and gentleness of manner.

Mr. Savage, accidentally glancing his eyes round the room, observed Sir Townly Beauchamp, and asked Charles if he knew him.

"I was introduced to him to-night," replied Charles; "but I cannot say I have any particular desire for the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"You understand his character, then," said Mr. Savage, smiling, "and think it prudent to keep out of his circle."

"I know nothing of him," replied Charles quickly; "but perhaps you can inform me whether he has quite such claims to fashionable celebrity as he assumes."

"To fashionable celebrity, or at least to *notoriety*," cried Mr. Savage, laying a particular emphasis on the word, "he has every claim that the most indefatigable pursuit of every mode likely to ensure it can enforce; nothing farther do I consider myself authorized to say, nor would it be a subject very likely to entertain your sister or Miss Montague. But can you tell me who the lady is Sir Townly honours with such peculiar notice: it is a compliment he is so seldom disposed to pay, that I must suppose he has his own reasons for so doing."

"The lady is my eldest sister," cried

Charles, laughing; "and, whatever may be Sir Townly's motives for paying her such a peculiar compliment, I don't think she can consider it as such."

"No, certainly not," said Mr. Savage, colouring; "but politeness sometimes demands a sacrifice of our inclinati n."

He then changed the sub cct, and forbore any further mention of Sir Townly Beauchamp.

An elderly lady, accompanied by a young man, and a very pretty mild-looking girl, passing, stopped to speak to Mr. Savage; and the gentleman, after looking at Charles for a moment, who was not attending to any of the party, called out, "How do you do, Montague? When did you come to town? I did not at first recollect you.

"Thank you," cried Charles, "I flattered myself I should not have been so soon forgotten."

Then rising, and addressing the two ladies by the name of Somerset, he begged pardon for his inattention, saying he had not before observed them.

His apologies the two ladies received with

gracious smiles; and young Somerset then asked him and Mr. Savage to join their party.

This proposal Charles declined, saying he could not leave his sister and cousin, who were under his protection.

Mrs. Somerset expressing a wish to be introduced to them, Charles complied with their request; when Miss Somerset, with a sweet, though rather a studied smile, and with graceful gentleness of manner, entered into conversation; asking when they had come to town: and learning, from their replies, that they had not been more than a few days arrived, and knew none of the present party, she asked them to take her arm, that she might introduce them to some of her friends, and particularly to her sister, who had come to spend the Christmas with her mother.

With this request they readily complied, though Sidney was rather surprised at observing what she thought a look of intelligence pass between Charles and Mr. Savage, who also accompanied them, and continued in their party.

The lady whom Miss Somerset introduced as her sister, by the name of Monk, was an uncommonly handsome, fine-looking woman, with a great and polished ease of manner; and, like Miss Somerset, she appeared extremely gentle and interesting.

Sidney, feeling the utmost prepossession in favour of the whole family, except Mr. Somerset, who appeared a frivolous coxcomb, was sorry when Charles proposed again changing their place under pretence of joining his mother, after politely, though steadily, declining a pressing invitation from Mr. Somerset, to accompany him to the country on a party of pleasure the ensuing day.

Mr. Savage still continuing with Charles, when they were at such a distance from the Somersets as to avoid any possibility of being overheard by them, asked why he had so resolutely declined joining Somerset's party?

"Because," cried Charles, laughing, "I have not the smallest desire to rid him of his last remaining sister: I will resign that honour to you. When shall I congratulate you on adding another to the list of raw inexpe-

rienced heirs, and battered beaux, who have fallen a prey to Mrs. Somerset's manœuvres, and her daughters' beauty? Faith, she has disposed of her large flock to more advantage than any other lady I know."

"I can't say," replied Mr. Savage, "that I am likely ever to give you an opportunity of congratulating me on such an event: the Somersets are too well known now, to give me any fears of venturing among them. I look at the gentle Miss Somerset as I should upon a pretty puppet moved by wires; I admire the mechanism, but without any dispostion to pay the price requisite for the purchase."

"It would be better, I think," said Charles, "to change the plan; the brother has so long hunted the game, and the same set of snares have been so long used for their destruction, that I fancy they have lost their efficacy. Miss Somerset is too uniformly *fair*: she should try the *brunette*; it would be more nouvelle,—look less as if under mamma's training.—Blanc-mange is a pretty dish; but *all blanc*-mange looks insipid, and must lessen the reverence we formerly had

for Mrs. Somerset's ingenuity as a matrimonial cook; but I suppose the old bait proved so palatable, that she has neither faith nor inclination to try any other."

"What can you mean, Charles?" cried Sidney, amazed at this conversation; "surely you cannot intend such allusions to the ladies we have just left."

"To say the truth," cried Anna, laughing, "I think Charles has acquired more vanity since our coming to town, short as the time is, than I thought he would have acquired in his whole life. I listen to him with astonishment."

"It only proves," said Mr. Savage, smiling, "that you are as yet but novices in the great world, or you would not suspect Montague of vanity in wishing to keep without the sphere of Miss Somerset's attractions. Very little vanity is required to tell the heir of such a property that he is always a desirable acquaintance,—if nothing more."

"I mean neither more nor less," exclaimed Charles, "than that I am not at all inclined to become the dupe of Mrs. Somerset's skill and her daughter's beauty. Wiser men than

I am have been deceived by both already; but, wise or foolish, it is all alike: gild but the victim, and, though bent with age, and ugly as sin, he would be equally an object for their toils. I have neither so much vanity nor folly as to suppose my individual self of the slightest importance."

Mr. Savage and Anna laughed, but Sidney's good nature hurt by the turn the conversation had taken interposed, and begged of Charles to change the subject.

"Does it offend your delicacy," cried he, smiling, "to hear there are such things in the world? My poor simple cousin, after this one winter, you will be as well inclined to laugh at them as I am myself."

"I hope not," said Sidney, earnestly: "I hope I may never feel inclined to laugh at what must be considered as degrading to the whole sex;" then, blushing at her own warmth, she stopped, and, smiling, added, "but you must be jesting,—I ought to have known you better."

Sir Townly Beauchamp advancing towards Charles, asked him how he had contrived to amuse himself; adding, that though not yet

sufficiently long in Dublin to judge of all its merits, he felt inclined, from the little he had seen, to pronounce it a confounded bore.

"It may, very probably, to those who belong to a certain set," cried Charles; "but a man of taste and fortune may amuse himself very tolerably in Dublin, where he will find hospitality without ostentation, and rank without insolence."

Sir Townly, inexpressibly astonished at a sneer he had so little expected, was bursting forth with "What do you mean, sir?" but, checking himself, forced a smile, and said, he had come at so unfavourable a season of the year to Dublin, that he could not be deemed a competent judge; but he made no doubt, that when more familiarized to his native soil, he should like it better; though the companions with whom he had been accustomed to associate in London had rather prejudiced him against a country which they, perhaps injudiciously, held in contempt.

Charles, little appeased by a speech that even implied opinions so derogatory to his

native country, for which he felt the most enthusiastic regard, replied, with some warmth, that he was incapable of making a just comparison between Dublin and London, of which place he was perfectly ignorant, and scarcely desired to be less so; as he could feel very little wish for the charms of any society professedly inimical to his country.

Sir Townly perceiving, that, if he wished to recommend himself to Charles, he must not pursue the same conduct which he had already found but too successful with several young men with whom he had become acquainted since his arrival, that of exciting their wonder by his assuming boasts, and rendering them ashamed of the manners of their own country, and peculiarly anxious to ingratiate himself with Charles, he took more pains than he had ever bestowed on a similar occasion to render himself agreeable. Charles, flattered by having compelled the insolent Sir Townly to lower his tone, and to speak with less flippancy of a country, which though his own, he affected to hold in sovereign contempt, insensibly forgot his indignation, and talked to him with

something of his usual gaiety and good humour.

On Mrs. Montague's rising to retire, Sir Townly took care to be in readiness to attend Fanny to the carriage, who was extremely gratified by the compliment, and declared, as they drove home, that he was one of the most fashionable men with whom she had ever conversed.

On reaching Merrion-square, Sidney and Anna retired to the room of the former, to talk over the occurrences of the evening, which Sidney said she had felt very stupid; and then expressed her surprise at the manner in which Charles had spoken of the Somersets, saying, she thought them very pleasing in their manners.

"That is only a new proof of the sympathy of your taste and Major Sedley's," replied Anna: "Charles told me to-night that he had learned from Mr. French, that the Major had once been attached to Mrs. Monk; and would have been married, even in opposition to Elmore's advice, who hated the whole family, had not Mr. Monk come forward in the

nick of time, with *Honourable* tacked to his name, and a better fortune than the poor Major, and carried off the prize. Now, pray don't let this make you jealous, for it happened a hundred years ago."

This anecdote gave Sidney momentary pain, and she could no longer wonder, that after having been the dupe of so beautiful, and, apparently, so amiable a woman as Mrs. Monk, Sedley should not feel inclined to place very implicit confidence in any other woman. "Alas!" thought she, "does he consider me as a second Mrs. Monk?" But a recollection of Sedley's candid statement to her at Belle Vue of the whole affair, and his declaration of how little his heart had been engaged, soothed her uneasiness, though it increased her regret at being separated, perhaps for ever, from one to whom neither beauty, nor wealth offered any temptation, when convinced they were unaccompanied by genuine worth and goodness.

CHAP. X.

SEVERAL small parties were given to the Montague family, at which they constantly met Sir Townly Beauchamp and Mrs. Talbot; and sometimes Mr. Savage, who became a constant visitor at Merrion-square, taking great pleasure in this renewal of intimacy with his old college companion, and appearing anxious to cultivate the acquaintance of the whole family, by whom he was treated with the peculiar distinction always paid to a friend introduced by Charles.

Mr. Ingram also became an almost daily visitant; and, under pretence of speaking to Sidney of her lawsuit, he contrived to engross a large portion of her time; though she felt the dislike which his first address had occasioned considerably increased by a sort of vague fear, that she could discover in

his manner something like a wish to recommend himself to her favour. This observation induced her to seek every opportunity of joining Charles, who was excessively diverted at what he termed the counsellor's solemn admiration of his pretty cousin ; and always attacked him with a species of provoking raillery that put him immediately to flight.

Fanny, who from the time it had been absolutely determined that Sidney and Anna should be presented, had withdrawn herself from their society, now became almost an inmate of Mrs. Talbot's house, often going out with her in the morning, and spending the remainder of the day there, if not otherwise engaged. Long uncontrolled mistress of her own actions, no person interfered on the subject ; though Anna sometimes entertained herself with conjectures of what could be the magnet that attracted her so constantly to Mrs. Talbot's, and hinted that she thought it was Sir Townly Beauchamp ; while Charles considered it impossible that Fanny could for a moment think seriously of such a man, after the many superior connexions in point of character, and,

as he had reason to believe, in point of fortune also, which she had peremptorily rejected; and, though he laughed at her love of admiration, he concluded that she was infinitely too ambitious to bestow that wealth, she had always so highly prized, on one who could not make her a very suitable return.

Charles did not, in this instance, judge of Fanny with his usual penetration, or rather he had no means of judging of her in circumstances in which he had never before seen her placed. Implicitly depending on Sir Townly's assertions, she believed him as superior in wealth as she considered him in fashion and consequence to any man who had yet addressed her: and all the intuitive admiration, which Sedley's manly beauty and graceful manners had involuntarily excited, now sunk into contempt for what she thought his want of taste and penetration, when compared with the flattering distinctions she received from a man of such celebrity as she fancied Sir Townly to be.

Sir Townly had seen so much of what is

called the world, and was so deeply versed in the art of adapting his wily manners to his purposes, that he quickly perceived that ostentatious display was the best mode of securing Fanny's heart, though not calculated to win the esteem of the remainder of her family. To that, however, he was indifferent, farther than suited the success of his schemes, which seemed to demand incessant court to Mr. Montague and Charles. To Sidney and Anna he behaved with contemptuous neglect, not only as they were the objects of Fanny's jealousy, but from being naturally inclined to treat all women in the same way. This trait in his disposition, though it might naturally have inspired Fanny with alarm, had the opposite effect, by flattering her with an opinion of the superior compliment he paid to herself. His treatment of the two nearest objects of her rivalry, and consequent aversion, recommended him equally to her favour; and as Mrs. Talbot took no less pains than Sir Townly to sooth, flatter, and cajole her, for the first time in her life she lived in a state of

intoxicating pleasure, yielding up all the understanding, with which she had been gifted, a willing dupe to their arts.

Some weeks had thus elapsed, and the Christmas holidays had just expired, when, for the first time since her coming to town, Sidney received an invitation from Mrs. Hamilton to dine and spend the ensuing Thursday with her, and to accompany herself and family to the play.

Her note Sidney shewed to Mr. Montague, who told her he thought it prudent for her to go, and she accordingly returned an acceptance of the invitation.

On the morning of the day appointed she learned from Anna that Mrs. Montague had, at Fanny's request, also made a party for that night to go to the theatre, to see a celebrated performer just arrived from England; and that Mrs. Talbot, Sir Townly Beauchamp, and several others who had promised to join them, were to sup at Merrion-square.

Anna expressed her regret that she was not to be of their party instead of Mrs. Hamilton's; and Sidney, on learning this intelligence, requested her to tell Charles, that if he would

come for her when the play was over, she would return to supper at Merrion-square, as she disliked spending more of her time than it was possible to avoid in the company of the Hamiltons.

This message Anna delivered to Charles, who promised, with great pleasure, to go for her, as he was very averse to her associating with the Hamiltons, though he did not choose to oppose his father's wishes.

At the customary hour, Mrs. Montague's carriage drove to the door, to take Sidney to Rutland-square; and, as she purposely delayed to the last moment, on her arrival she found a large party assembled, all total strangers to her except Mr. and Mrs. Elverton, whom, with some surprise, she saw seated on the sofa beside Mrs. Hamilton.

Mrs. Elverton with evident confusion expressed great pleasure at seeing Sidney, and inquired for all her other friends in Merrion-square; Mr. Elverton, with more ease making similar inquiries:

Sidney, replied to their questions, and then asked if Mrs. Hervey was in town.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Elverton, "but she does not live with us;" and added, with an affectation of embarrassment, "I dare say, Miss Montague, you were vastly surprised when you heard of my elopement;—you must wonder what induced me to take such a step."

"Love, undoubtedly," cried Mr. Elverton, "for I hope, Eliza, you do not wish to persuade Miss Montague that I forced you away with me."

Mrs. Elverton put up her lip, but made no reply; and Mr. Elverton said to Sidney, he hoped that all his friends at C—— were well when she quitted the country.

"Very well, sir," replied she, dreading that he would speak of Sedley; "we saw all your friends there the day before we left Belle Vue."

"I understood, from a letter I received from French," cried Mr. Elverton, "that Sedley left C—— a few days after I did; though not," continued he, smiling conceitedly, "on the same pleasing errand; he told me something very disagreeable, but what he did not mention, had called him away. Indeed poor

Sedley had always an unfortunate knack of being annoyed by trifles, which no other person would consider of any consequence: every little *contre tems* displeased him. I often advised him to get rid of that folly; but he thought himself infinitely too wise to be guided by me."

During the whole of this speech Mr. Elverton fixed his eyes on Sidney with an expression of scrutinizing curiosity; and, as her confusion was but too apparent, she perceived that Mrs. Hamilton also regarded her with pointed observation; at length, endeavouring to smile, she said, she knew nothing of Major Sedley's private affairs.

"Well now," exclaimed Mrs. Elverton, "I am so much surprised to hear you say so! Do you know every person said he was an admirer of your's? and I am sure I always thought so."

Sidney, too much confused to reply to this direct attack, remained silent; and Mr. Elverton formally begged her pardon for his inadvertent censure of Sedley; adding, "perhaps, at the time to which I alluded, he was

only in love; and I know, from experience, what uncomfortable feelings it gives a man. But really I am much concerned to hear that any thing serious has occurred to distress him; —I hope when you last heard from him he had quite recovered from any uneasiness he might have felt."

"I have heard nothing of Major Sedley, sir," cried Sidney offended, and endeavouring to disguise the emotion which the mention of his name, and his being considered her admirer, had excited, "since we left C——."

Elverton again begged pardon for his mistake, though in a way that convinced Sidney that he was not ignorant of their attachment; and she felt much pleased at the entrance of a gentleman, who, by engaging the attention of Mr. and Mrs. Elverton, relieved her from their observation. Mrs. Hamilton, immediately rising, introduced this gentleman to Sidney as her eldest son, Fortescue Hamilton, who had the preceding day arrived in town.

Young Hamilton, applying his glass to his eye, gazed with insolent curiosity at Sidney, as he said, "I should have done myself the

honour of waiting on you, this morning, Miss Montague; but, as I am not acquainted with any of the Montagues, it would not be *selon les regles*, to visit at their house."

"I should be extremely sorry," said Sidney coldly, "that you should shew me any attention disagreeable to your own feelings."

"To shew you attention," replied he, with forced politeness, "could not possibly be disagreeable to me; but, as I must confess I have no desire to become acquainted with the Montagues, I must beg leave to decline whatever could lead to such an occurrence."

Sidney bowed, but made no reply; and, Hamilton, having gratified his curiosity by taking a full survey of her countenance, sauntered to the fire, and, leaning in a careless manner against the chimney-piece, conversed with several gentlemen present with a species of affectation, that did not impress Sidney with any favourable opinion of his understanding, till they were summoned to dinner.

Sidney felt herself extremely uncomfortable. The Miss Hamiltons, though more

polite than usual, were stiff and disagreeable; Mrs. Hamilton silent and reserved; and, Fortescue Hamilton talked incessantly, but on subjects which could not be very amusing to Sidney, as they consisted of the comparative merits of different wines and dishes, approved by connoisseurs in the art of good eating; interspersed with occasional anecdotes, collected from the Curragh, and other places of fashionable, or gambling resort.

Mr. Elverton, though a perfect adept in the Apician science, and a very eloquent declaimer on its merits, did not appear much interested in the other subjects which Mr. Hamilton discussed, and on which he received but little assistance from the young men present: for, there were few topics of general conversation to which they were equal, and those he selected were evidently ill calculated for the entertainment of the ladies present. But Mr. Hamilton, perfectly careless whom he amused or offended, felt no other desire than to impress his company with an opinion of his being, to the full extent of the term, a completely fashionable man.

Weary of his conversation, and extremely disgusted by his manners, Sidney was much pleased when Mrs. Hamilton rose to retire, which she did early, to set out for the theatre, whither her son and many others of the gentlemen promised to follow.

Mrs. Elverton asking Sidney to take a seat in her carriages, she gladly accepted her offer, delighted to escape Mrs. Hamilton and her daughters, who could scarcely so far disguise their dislike as to treat her with civility, though deeming it prudent to ask her to their house, for the purpose her uncle Montague had so readily guessed. Fortescue Hamilton, though equally anxious to forward his own more immediate interest, could even less conceal his hatred, which his forced efforts at politeness rendered yet more glaring than his sisters' cold and studied formality; and Sidney internally resolved to avoid as much as possible any farther intercourse with them all.

Eager to speak of herself and her own affairs, for which purpose Mrs. Elverton had asked Sidney to accompany her during their drive to Crow-street, she related all the cir-

cumstances of her elopement with Mr. Elverton. With extreme surprise, Sidney heard her declare that she had never had the slightest intention of taking such a step, or, indeed, of marrying Elverton, till after the night of the ball at Belle Vue; when he became so jealous of Charles Montague, whom her aunt was most anxious for her to marry, that he actually teased her into going off with him; Elverton had taken her to Mrs. Hamilton's, who was a distant relation of his own; and from her house they had been married. She concluded by saying that she very heartily repented he conduct, as Elverton had not only left the army, which had been one of her principal inducements to marry him, but he had also behaved extremely ill to herself and and her aunt in several other instances.

Sidney's astonishment at every part of this recital was so great that she knew not how to reply; but, finding Mrs. Elverton appeared offended at her silence, she at length said she was surprised at Mr. Elverton's leaving the army, so contrary to her inclination.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Elverton, pettishly, "he says he could not avoid it, though it was extremely disagreeable to him to take such a step; for that, as he had left his regiment without obtaining leave of absence, he had been of course suspended, and could not think of again joining after such a disgrace; but, as I told him, he might have gone into some other regiment. I am sure, if I had thought he would have acted as he has done, I never would have accepted his hand."

Their arrival at the theatre obliged Mrs. Elverton abruptly to break off her complaints, to which Sidney had felt most reluctant to listen, for, she could not approve either Mrs. Elverton's late or present conduct, and knew not how to offer consolation for a disappointment she could scarcely think undeserved, after so grossly violating the laws of decorum for a man whom, in two months after marriage, she declared she had never loved, and whom, with as little attention to propriety, she openly avowed she now disliked; and though, from his character and conduct, this was not very

surprising, it served as no justification to the woman who was now, in consequence of her own folly, his wife.

On going into the house, Sidney observed the Montagues and a brilliant party in the box exactly opposite to that which Mrs. Hamilton had engaged. On catching Charles's eye, who was standing in the second row with Sir Townly Beauchamp, he made her a bow of arch congratulation, which, with infinite chagrin, she discovered originated in Mr. Ingram's having left Mr. Montague's box, and come round to the one in which she was sitting.

Offended by conduct which she thought a public avowal of pretensions he had not yet presumed to hint to herself, and by the impropriety of his endeavouring to engross her attention in a party to whom he was avowedly hostile, Sidney, with undisguised displeasure, replied to his studied compliments and expressions of sorrow at her not being with the Montague family. Mr. Ingram, concluded from her manner that she was afraid of offending her aunt Hamilton by conversing with him, and soon relieved her from his presence,

but declaring, before he went, that her happiness was infinitely dearer to him than his own.

To a declaration that, for the first time, explicitly avowed what were his views, Sidney was prevented from replying by his abruptly leaving the box; but she resolved, the very next opportunity he gave her, decidedly to tell him how little chance he had of succeeding in his present pursuit.

Mr. Hamilton, with several of his companions, coming in, he advanced to where Sidney was sitting, and placing himself on the side of the box, with his back to the stage, asked how she was entertained.

"Very much," replied Sidney; "the whole scene is so novel to me, that I find it more amusing than those, perhaps, who are more accustomed to the theatre."

"Yes, no doubt," cried he, carelessly; "it is a tolerably pleasant lounge for an hour or two, as one generally sees their friends; but, as to any other kind of entertainment, I must vote it a d—d bore."

To this polite remark Sidney made no answer; and, after a few moments' silence,

Hamilton exclaimed, with a yawn, "Montague, I believe, will have a good fortune when his father pops off. Pray, what sort of a looking fellow is he?"

"Of that," replied Sidney, "you can judge for yourself; for, in the fourth box from the stage, he is now standing, speaking to Sir Townly Beauchamp."

"To Sir Townly Beauchamp!" repeated Hamilton, who appeared roused from his lethargy by the name; "is Montague acquainted with Sir Townly?"

Sidney replied that he visited at her uncle's.

Mr. Hamilton, applying his glass to his eye, looked into the box Sidney had mentioned; and after gazing at Charles for some time, and taking an equally accurate survey of all the party it contained, exclaimed, "If I can judge from Montague's appearance, he seems a fellow of some spirit,—all Sir Townly Beauchamp's friends are; though, from never having heard him spoken of by any person I knew, I concluded he was a mere chip in porridge. I suppose his father is a mere old hunks, and will not allow him to cut any

dash. It would be a good hit for him if the old gentleman would take it into his head to move off to t'other world."

"In forming such an opinion of my uncle and of Charles Montague," said Sidney, offended by this speech, "you are, I assure you, equally mistaken. No man can behave more kindly, or more generously, to a son, than my uncle does to him; and I do not believe that there are many sons more truly sensible of a father's kindness than Charles."

"Very probable," exclaimed Hamilton, contemptuously; "I now see, that I should have set him down as one of the righteous. I do not, however," added he, with a disgusting laugh, "aspire to the character of sanctity, and will, therefore, freely declare, that I feel monstrous glad that *my* father is quietly at rest, and has left me my own master."

Sidney concluding that Hamilton intended personally to offend her, by speaking in this manner of her relations and even of his own father, disdained any reply; and Hamilton, moving from his place, paid her no farther attention.

On the conclusion of the play, the Montague family left their box; and, as Mrs. Hamilton made no indication of moving, Sidney concluded that she meant to sit out the entertainment, and felt dismayed at the prospect of being thus obliged to remain so much longer among a party in every way so disagreeable. But in a few moments after, Sir Townly Beauchamp, coming into the box, told her young Montague had sent him to request that she would keep her appointment of returning to Merrion-square to supper.

Sidney immediately wished Mrs. Hamilton and the party good evening, and was leaving the box, when, observing Sir Townly in earnest conversation with Mr. Hamilton, she was obliged to wait for him.

Sir Townly having invited Hamilton to come with him, that he might decidedly introduce him to Montague, who was a good fellow, offered his arm to Sidney; and Hamilton, assenting to his proposal, followed them out.

In the passage they found Anna, Charles, Mr. Ingram, and Mr. Savage; when Charles,

taking Sidney by the hand, told her Mrs. Talbot had gone home with his mother, and had left her carriage for her and Anna, adding, in a whisper, "I promised to take care of you; but as I am engaged to sup with Sir Townly Beauchamp, I will give you in charge to Savage, who will see you home."

To this arrangement Sidney was going to object; but suspecting from Charles's manner, that he had sat rather too long after dinner, and was not perfectly capable of judging of the propriety of what he proposed, she remained silent, feeling that she might confide in Mr. Savage's delicacy

On reaching the carriage, Charles handed them in. Mr. Ingram, who was already apprized of young Montague's intention of not returning with them, instantly made an offer of his services to escort the ladies; when Mr. Savage, without appearing to hear what he was saying, jumped hastily into the carriage, wishing Charles good night, and assuring him he felt great pleasure in discharging the trust with which he had honoured him.

On observing the expression of anger and

mortification which Mr. Ingram's countenance exhibited, at witnessing a manœuvre he had so little expected, Charles burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, exclaiming, "Fairly taken in, my good counsellor. What it is to be young and active. I dare say there was a day you could have made as good a leap as Savage, but the weight of years is a confounded heavy impediment."

Unable to endure raillery so peculiarly galling in the presence of a young and beautiful girl, the embarrassed state of whose fortune he hoped would incline her to accept, with eagerness, the proposals which he meant in due time to make, Mr. Ingram angrily replied, "I don't understand you, Mr. Montague: propriety, and not any other motive, rendered me equally anxious with Mr. Savage to have the honour of attending the Miss Montagues home; but, sir, when you selected him as their escort, I could not further think of intruding."

"Well, well," cried Charles, drily, "to make what amends I can, I shall select you as

their squire instead of their knight; so now for a spring beside the coachman."

This proposal Mr. Ingram haughtily declined, and turned off towards his own carriage. Charles called after him to be on his guard against the cold of the night air, which he might find prejudicial at his time of life, and, taking Sir Townly's arm, who, with Hamilton, had laughed loudly at the whole transaction, they proceeded down the street together. Mr. Savage, having given Mrs. Talbot's servant orders to proceed to Merrion-square, then said, with a smile, "I scarcely know whether I ought most to apologize for my intrusion, or to express my pleasure at the honour Montague has done me. Of the distinction he has conferred I feel really vain: though, had I not been very anxious to distance the solemn counsellor, I should not have taken such hasty advantage of the permission he granted me of returning in the same carriage with you."

"I am sorry," cried Anna, "that I cannot assist you to determine so knotty a point;

but, as we must consider the honour of your protection fully equal to the honour of taking care of us, our wisest plan will be to suffer them to balance each other in the best manner they can."

"Certainly," said Sidney, much pleased that his quickness had prevented the attendance of Mr. Ingram, "we must feel obliged at your so kindly undertaking an office which Charles was so anxious to resign."

Mr. Savage, quickly declaring that he did not intend to assume any merit for doing what gave him such infinite pleasure, changed the subject, and neither Sidney nor Anna again reverted to it, as both felt some degree of awkwardness in their situation, though by no means disposed to censure Charles too severely for levity which had arisen from a circumstance of rare occurrence in him.

On their arrival at Merrion-square, Mr. Montague, missing Charles, asked where he was.

"We left him with Sir Townly Beauchamp, sir," replied Anna.

"And did you return alone?" said Mr. Montague.

"No, sir," cried Anna, hesitating, and unwilling to say that Charles had consigned them to another's care; "but, as Mr. Savage was returning here to supper, he accompanied us on finding Charles engaged."

"It was very wrong of Charles to leave you," said Mr. Montague, angrily; "indeed I am very much surprised at his conduct."

Mr. Ingram, approaching, took a seat beside Sidney, and addressed her with a profusion of his usual formal compliments. On observing this converstion, Mr. Savage quickly advanced, and, taking a seat which Anna purposely vacated for him, as she shared all her brother's anxiety to torment Mr. Ingram, he addressed her with a degree of volubility that completely silenced the counsellor. Sidney, pleased at his having so opportunely supplanted Mr. Ingram in the carriage, and anxious to get rid of her old persecutor, listened and replied to him with such undisguised satisfaction, that Mr. Ingram soon yielded his post, feeling a degree of anger at Mr. Savage, which he felt it difficult to restrain, though not prudent to avow.

Mr. Savage then laying aside a manner assumed only for the purpose of forcing him into silence or retreat, after laughing heartily at the success of his stratagem, continued to converse with her as usual till they were summoned to supper.

When the family were alone Mr. Montague expressed great displeasure at Charles for having left his own party to join in that of a man whom he had every reason to believe a most improper companion; and declared that he must give up his acquaintance.

Fanny, though somewhat offended with Sir Townly for not returning to supper, as she had expected, was still more displeased by Mr. Montague's observations; and she peevishly observed that Sir Townly Beauchamp was a man of the first fashion and consequence, and she could not see why Charles's acting improperly should subject him to such undeserved censure."

"Your opinion of Sir Townly Beauchamp," cried Mr. Montague angrily, "is not to guide mine. His fashion or his consequence is a matter of perfect indifference to me; I will take care that my son shall not follow his

example; and I must confess msyelf surprised how any woman can suffer his fashionable appearance to plead his apology for the well-known vices of his character."

Fanny, not choosing to prolong the contest, remained silent; and Mrs. Montague, alarmed by her husband's remarks on Sir Townly's profligacy, declared she would not retire to her room till certain that Charles had returned home.

Against this resolution Mr. Montague endeavoured to remonstrate; but his arguments tending to increase Mrs. Montague's anxiety, by convincing her that he felt greater apprehensions than he chose to avow, he was obliged to yield the point, as he found it impracticable to undeceive her.

Fanny was so much offended by her father's remarks on Sir Townly, that she declared she could sit up no longer; and Miss Watkins, thinking Mrs. Montague's fears extremely ridiculous, and heartily fatigued, followed her example.

Sidney and Anna, though entertaining no fears for Charles's personal safety, determined

to remain with Mrs. Montague, to await his return.

Hour after hour passed away, but Charles did not make his appearance; and Mrs. Montague, at length, became so alarmed, that, unable to sit quiet, she paced the room in restless agitation, entreating Mr. Montague would send Kennedy in search of her beloved Charles, who had been, perhaps, robbed and murdered; for such were the fears that haunted her terrified imagination.

Mr. Montague, after vainly endeavouring to calm her apprehensions, said, "Why, Lucy, my love, do you torment yourself with such imaginary fears? Charles has, I am convinced, gone to some gambling-house with Sir Townly Beauchamp; nothing worse do I dread. Let me entreat you, then, to retire with the girls, and compose yourself to sleep,—I will stay here till he comes."

"Oh, no," cried she, sobbing violently; "I cannot sleep, I cannot rest, without first hearing some intelligence of my dearest child. Let him go where he would, he never could have staid out till this hour if something dread-

ful had not occurred. My dear Charles loves me too tenderly, to give me such unnecessary misery."

Mr. Montague, finding his arguments and entreaties thus ineffectual, merely endeavoured to sooth her; and Sidney, forgetting all her late unkindness, sought by the gentlest tenderness to console her. All, however, was alike unheeded, till, at length, perfectly exhausted, she consented to retire to bed, on condition that Sidney and Anna would sit with Mr. Montague, and bring her the earliest intelligence that could be gained of her son; Mr. Montague promising, if he did not return in the interim, the moment it was light he would himself go in search of him.

"I did not think," cried Mr. Montague, when she was gone, "that Charles would have treated me so ill, or made so ungrateful a return for all his poor mother's tenderness, as wilfully to make her pass such a night; but, since he makes so ill an use of our indulgence, he shall henceforth be taught to place a proper value on it."

Unable to make any apology for Charles,

and hoping he would, on his return, offer such an one for himself as would mitigate his father's displeasure, Sidney made no reply; and Anna, dreading to interfere when she saw her father so highly irritated, also remained silent.

As soon as it was day-light, Mr. Montague rung the bell, and, when Kennedy appeared, told him to prepare to accompany him in search of his master, and to bring him his great coat and hat.

The servant had scarcely left the drawing-room for this purpose, when they were startled by a loud knocking at the hall-door. Anna was instantly darting forward, followed by Sidney, when Mr. Montague, calling to them to remain where they were, left the room.

In a short time he returned, holding an open letter in his hand; and, with a countenance on which anger and alarm were visibly impressed, said, "This is conduct I did not expect from Charles; but do not give your aunt a hint of what has occurred till my return. The carriage is ready, and I will be back as speedily as I can."

He then left the room; and Sidney, equally surprised and terrified, unfolded the letter he had given her, which contained the following lines, so badly written as to be scarcely legible; and the direction so dirty, that it was almost impossible to be deciphered.

"For Orby H. Montague, Esq.

"My dear Father,

"I feel almost ashamed to ask you to come immediately on receipt of this letter, to the watch-house in —— Street, where I am at present confined. On leaving the tavern last night, where I supped with Sir Townly Beauchamp, and a party of his friends, he assaulted the watch; and, as I was in such a state as to be incapable of reflection, I followed his example. I was knocked down; and, as Sir Townly and his companions instantly fled, I was left wholly at the mercy of those ruffian-guardians of the peace, who, after beating me severely, took me prisoner, and now refuse to liberate me without bail, as I must stand my trial for the assault.

"I know you will feel very angry, and I

acknowledge I deserve your displeasure; but I have paid dearly for my folly, having received some severe cuts on my head; and, as I have slept for several hours on the damp floor of a watch-house, I feel so ill, that I am scarcely able to write.

"I hope my poor mother has not been very uneasy, and that you, my dear father, will hasten immediately to

"Your most affectionate son,

C. MONTAGUE."

"*Friday Morning.*"

The first emotion, produced by this note, was indignation at the vulgar brutality, and baser treachery of Sir Townly and his companions; but it soon yielded to deep regret that Charles should have been enticed to associate with such contemptible wretches, and to the most poignant affliction for the alarming situation of one so dear to them both.

Mrs. Montague's woman, coming into the room, said her mistress requested to speak to one of the young ladies; when, observing them weeping, she eagerly inquired if they had heard any news of the Mr. Charles:

"No, no," cried Anna, remembering her father's injunctions: "but do you, dear Sidney, go to mamma; I could not," added she, in a whisper, "disguise what has happened."

With this request Sidney complied, and, dispelling her tears, went to Mrs. Montague's room.

On seeing her enter, Mrs. Montague eagerly demanded what had occasioned the noise she had heard, adding, that she had every moment expected some information from her.

"My uncle ordered the carriage, ma'am," said Sidney, "and it was the noise the servants made you must have heard; he is gone out, and has not yet returned."

"Something dreadful must have happened to my darling boy," exclaimed Mrs. Montague, clasping her hands in a paroxysm of grief; "if he were able to come home, no matter where he had spent his night, he would have returned before this, he would not thus have trifled with my feelings; but oh! perhaps," added she, shuddering, "he is no longer sensible of my sufferings."

"Do not, my dearest aunt," cried Sidney

tenderly, "thus cruelly harass yourself: my uncle entertains no fears for Charles's safety, nor indeed need you; and he will feel doubly wretched when he knows all the misery that he has occasioned to such an affectionate mother."

Mrs. Montague was unable to reply; and Sidney, sitting down beside the bed on which she had thrown herself, endeavoured to sooth and re-assure her by the hopes which her own knowledge of the transaction enabled her to give, though lamenting that her uncle's mistaken tenderness had prevented her from imparting the worst at once.

Mrs. Montague listened to her in silence; then, suddenly starting up, exclaimed, "Sidney, if you wish to serve me, go down and watch for your uncle's return, and bring me the first intelligence that can be procured of my child. I am not able to go myself, or I would not remain here."

Sidney, unable to forbear weeping on beholding the horror and anguish of her look, and at a knowledge of what she would feel, even when informed of the real situation of her son, obeyed in silence, aware how useless

any other consolation than the sight of Charles would prove.

In about half an hour after her return to the drawing-room, she saw her uncle's carriage driving rapidly along the square; but, as the blinds were up, she could not perceive who was within-side; and dreading to have Mrs. Montague alarmed by a knock at the door, till enabled to give her some distinct information, she flew down stairs to open it, followed by Anna.

Unwilling to expose themselves to the observation of passengers in the street in the full dress which they had worn on the preceding night, they immediately retired to the foot of the stairs, and, in a moment after, Charles entered the hall, supported between Mr. Montague and Kennedy, his head wrapped up in a handkerchief dyed with blood, his eyes so swelled as to be scarcely discernible, his face pale and bruised, his clothes torn and covered with mud; and altogether so altered, and disfigured, as to be hardly recognised.

Overpowered by a sight for which not even his letter had prepared them, Sidney clung

to the banisters for support, while Anna screamed aloud.

Mr. Montague called to her to command her feelings or she would alarm her mother; and Charles raising his head, gave them a glance, which bespoke equal pain of mind and body, when perceiving by their appearance, that they had not been in bed all night; he said, in a faint voice, "I have made you spend a wretched night, my poor girls; but, indeed, it is the most miserable one that I ever passed."

"Let us not delay, Charles, my dear fellow," exclaimed Mr. Montague, "as I am very anxious to relieve the misery your poor mother has so long endured about you."

"I am sincerely grieved," cried Charles, in a low voice, "for having given her so much real cause for sorrow."

Then, exerting himself, he hurried to his own apartment, assisted by Mr. Montague and his servant, and followed by Sidney and Anna, anxious to render him every service in their power.

The moment he got into his room, he threw

himself on his bed; and Mr. Montague, desired Kennedy to hurry for a surgeon, and Sidney to procure some rose-water to bathe his eyes, as Anna's presence of mind had so wholly forsaken her, that she was incapable of making any effort to give assistance. He was leaving the room, to apprize Mrs. Montague of his return, and to request she would not think of seeing Charles till after the surgeon had dressed his wounds, when the door was opened by Mrs. Montague, who had been alarmed by the noise they had made in coming up stairs, and would not be withheld by her woman, from coming to inquire the cause, having caught the distant sound of her husband's voice.

On seeing her enter, Mr. Montague made a hasty effort to prevent her approaching the bed; and Sidney, from a similar dread of her seeing Charles in his present state, attempted to conceal his face; but Mrs. Montague, darting forward with a rapidity that baffled their endeavours to save her from such a shock, no sooner caught a full view of his bloody and disfigured countenance, than,

uttering a piercing scream, she fell forward on the bed, exclaiming, "oh! have I lived to see my darling child murdered?"

Roused by her scream, Charles opened his eyes; and, on seeing his mother, and hearing her utter such an affecting exclamation, he suddenly started up, and, pressing her to his bosom, tenderly said, "Do not, my dearest mother, give way to such apprehensions; I am not dangerously wounded, and deserve what I have met with for engaging in such low unmanly brawls. I cannot forgive myself for all I have made you suffer; but, in pity to me, do not add to what I at present feel, by giving way to sorrow and alarm, which it cuts me to the soul to have occasioned."

"My dear, my kind, my darling boy," cried Mrs. Montague, "only tell me that I shall not lose you, and I will be satisfied. If once convinced of your safety, surely I should not be so cruel as to add to your sufferings by giving way to my own feelings."

Scarcely could Charles give the assurance she requested, so entirely was his fortitude overpowered by a view of the distress and

grief that she exhibiteded. Mr. Montague, pitying his feelings, and apprehensive that such violent agitation might, in his present state, injure him, so earnestly entreated Mrs. Montague to leave him, repeatedly assuring her his life was in no danger, and that her stay merely prevented his receiving the assistance he required, that Mrs. Montague, after tenderly embracing him, consented to accompany her husband.

The moment Charles could speak, after her departure, he asked Sidney to bathe his eyes, which were in great pain, as he had received a severe stroke from one of the poles, exactly across both.

Sidney, immediately procured the rose-water, which the entrance and anguish of Mrs. Montague had driven from her recollection, and complied with his desire; when, washing away the blood and mud, with which his face was almost covered, she perceived, with terror, that his head was severely cut in several places. Anna, who was standing beside her, trembling with fright, asked him if he was really as certain, as he had assured her mamma, that

none of those dreadful wounds he had received were dangerous.

"I am indeed," cried he, "perfectly convinced I am in no sort of danger; but don't, my dear Anna, ask me any more questions; I am not able to speak; follow my poor Sidney's example, who is so kindly relieving the pain I endure without making a single inquiry."

Then, feeling the tears Sidney could no longer restrain fall on his face, as she bent over him to bathe his eyes, he tenderly pressed her hand, saying, in a very low voice, "I can never forget all this, Sidney."

Mr. Montague coming into the room, Sidney made no reply; but, hastily wiping away her tears, continued her employment; while Mr. Montague, in an agony of terror he did not choose to betray, walked through the chamber, in impatient expectation of the surgeon's arrival. For, though he did not consider the wounds to be in themselves dangerous, yet he dreaded that having lain so long on a damp floor, when his blood, heated by wine and passion, doubly exposed him to the risk

of cold, might, added to the wounds, and bruises, produce a fever: the fatal consequences of which he felt were more than he could support, even in idea.

Shortly after his entrance, the surgeon arrived; when Sidney and Anna went to their rooms to change their dress for one more suitable to the occasion, that they might be enabled to appear at breakfast, which Sidney had ordered, as Anna could neither think nor act with consistency, so wholly had terror overpowered her faculties. Sidney, though equally grieved, exerted all her fortitude, that she might give every assistance in her power to her uncle and Charles, who were both in need of much attention.

Before she was ready to go down stairs, Mrs. Rice, who had been called to attend young Montague, entered the room; and, with a countenance beaming with pleasure, informed her the surgeon had declared that her dear young master would be very well in a few days, as he had not received any wound in the slightest degree doubtful; she then burst forth into violent abuse of those who had brought him

into such scenes,—he who had never before engaged in any thing of the kind.

Much relieved by this account, Sidney proceeded with a lightened heart to the drawing-room, and Mrs. Rice returned to Charles's apartment.

Sidney was in a short time joined by Mr. Montague, Anna, and the surgeon, who repeated the favourable opinion he had already pronounced; and, after writing some prescriptions, sat down to breakfast.

On the surgeon's taking his leave, Mr. Montague, embracing Sidney and Anna with great warmth thanked them for all their kind attention to Mrs. Montague, Charles, and himself; and then requested they would retire to bed, and endeavour to obtain some rest after the fatigue they had undergone.

With this request they were going to comply, more to gratify Mr. Montague than from feeling fatigue, to which their anxiety about Charles rendered them wholly insensible, when Mr. Savage, entering the room with a countenance of haste and consternation, advanced to Mr. Montague, and inquired how

Charles was, entreating to be informed of what had in reality happened.

Mr. Montague, affectionately thanking him for his kind and friendly interest about his son, frankly related all that had occurred, and in turn begged to know how he had so soon heard of the accident.

Mr. Savage, expressed the greatest pleasure at finding he had heard so exaggerated an account of his friend's danger, and said his servant had met Montague's in the street, and, hearing from him a confused report of what had occurred, he had hastened to the house to make inquiries; when learning that the family had been up all night, and were then in the drawing-room, he had waved ceremony, and come up for the purpose of receiving the quickest intelligence of a friend for whom he felt so strongly interested; he concluded by expressing his concern at observing, from Sidney and Anna's pale and languid countenances, how much they had suffered.

"They have, poor girls," said Mr. Montague, "passed a very anxious night; and, were it not for the situation in which I found

Charles, I should not have so easily passed over conduct I consider so disgraceful. I shall not, however, enter on the subject with him till he is perfectly recovered, which I trust he will be in a few days; but, if he does not then consent to give up any farther acquaintance with Sir Townly Beauchamp than a mere passing bow, it will produce a very serious quarrel between us, as I look upon him to be a man of most dangerous character."

"His acquaintance," said Mr. Savage, "Charles will very readily renounce, as I know he both dislikes and despises him; and, had he not been off his guard last night, he would not have accepted his invitation. Beauchamp, I know, has taken great pains to render himself agreeable, and for the purpose, I must confess I think, of draining him of a little of his ready cash. He did, in London, take me in for a few hundreds before I was aware of his character; and, as I gave the hint to Montague, I thought it would have preserved him from becoming a similar dupe: but by our own experience alone do we profit; and he could scarcely have imagined there

would have been any danger in a mere supper party; though, could he have supposed Beauchamp to be the man I have reason to know him, he would have acted more prudently. But, when he and I have a little conversation, I will venture to say, he will not again join in his parties; though, after what has passed, I need scarcely, perhaps, speak."

Mr. Montague, again thanking him for his friendship for his son, entreated he would take the first opportunity of speaking to Charles on the subject, as he was always better pleased to have him act right from the conviction of his own judgment than from being compelled into it by his authority. He had not, he said, been often obliged to exert it; and never, unless in a case of absolute necessity, wished to do so.

Mr. Savage, readily promising to comply with Mr. Montague's request, took his leave.

At dinner the family assembled as usual; and as Charles felt much refreshed by a long sleep, and as the physicians, whom Mr. Montague had in the course of the day called in, declared they hoped he would, by care and

attention, escape any farther ill consequences from what had occurred than a few days' confinement to his bed, Mrs. Montague had a little recovered from her alarm; though, every time that she went up to his room, she returned with eyes swollen with weeping, which a sight of his disfigured countenance excited.

Fanny's anger on learning what had taken place, and that the blame was, as she weakly believed unjustly, thrown on Sir Townly Beauchamp, was nearly outrageous; but, perceiving that her father was deeply offended at the utter indifference she had betrayed about Charles, and her mother scarcely less displeased, she confined her sentiments to her own breast. Mr. Montague thus deceived into believing that her conduct on the preceding night had been the effect of pique to Charles, for some trifling dispute which had occurred between them, it obliterated the suspicion he had for the moment felt of her having a prepossession in favour of Sir Townly Beauchamp, and induced him to give up the intention he had formed of forbidding her farther

intimacy with Mrs. Talbot, supposing that to Charles alone was Sir Townly's acquaintance dangerous.

Early in the evening Mr. Savage came to Merrion-square, and, hearing that Charles was awake, went up to his room. There he sat as long as prudence would permit; and, on his return to the drawing-room, told Mr. Montague he had been conversing with him on the subject on which they had been speaking in the morning; but found it quite unnecessary to offer his advice, as Charles had declared his determination of carefully avoiding the future intimacy of a man, whom, from his conduct, he believed of the most abandoned principles and ruffian-like disposition; professing himself deeply sensible of the disgrace he had incurred, and expressing the utmost anxiety to have the business privately settled, in order to escape a prosecution, which would make him ashamed to appear, by rendering the affair public. He concluded by saying, that, even from the imperfect account Charles could give of the transaction, it was evident that Sir Townly and his companions had behaved infamously,

by first wantonly attacking a set of watchmen, and then leaving him, in a situation which rendered him incapable of defending himself, to encounter the ill treatment which they had justly provoked.

"Since such are Charles's sentiments," cried Mr. Montague, "he shall receive no reproach from me for folly that has been so severely punished; and I will set his mind at ease by privately compromising the affair, and preserving him from an exposure which I should consider as disgraceful, and as keenly lament as he could. This I will to-morrow set about: and will you, my dear Savage, tell him so, as I should not for the present wish to enter into any discussion of the business with him."

Mr. Savage, declaring that he should feel great pleasure in executing such a commission, took his leave.

CHAP. XI.

On the following day, Charles, though feverish and restless, and infinitely more sensible to pain and uneasiness than he had been for the first few hours, exhibited no symptoms that alarmed his medical attendants, though their utmost efforts were unavailing to calm Mrs. Montague's apprehensions, who could not be prevailed on to quit his bed-side even for an instant. As Fanny refused to sit with her, and Anna, though unaffectedly anxious and unhappy about Charles, felt too much restraint in her mother's presence to afford her the consolation and assistance which her apprehensive terrors and restless solicitude required, Mrs. Montague found no relief, except from Sidney's gentle ministry and active attention to both herself and Charles, and could not endure that she should be a moment from her sight.

Tenderly anxious to lessen the uneasiness Charles suffered at witnessing the unhappiness he had made his mother feel, and to evince the gratitude and affection which his conduct towards her, from the first day of their acquaintance, had been so well calculated to inspire, no thought occupied Sidney's mind except to console Mrs. Montague by every means she could devise, and to relieve his sufferings. This Mrs. Montague's present feelings rendered no unpleasant exertion, as, losing all suspicion and jealousy of Sidney in anxiety about her son, to alleviate the pain he endured fully engrossed her thoughts; and whoever could in any way amuse or serve him was, for the moment, the object of her warmest gratitude; while Charles, tenfold more obliged to Sidney for her attention to his mother than for any she could pay himself, expressed the most animated gratitude to her, declaring it an obligation he never could forget.

Mrs. Talbot having gathered from Fanny a circumstantial detail of all that had oc-

curred, and that Sir Townly was the person accused by Mr. Montague of bringing his son into his present situation, lost no time in apprizing Sir Townly of the information she had thus acquired, accompanied by the severest censures for the imprudence and impropriety of his conduct.

Sir Townly felt great rage, at her presuming to offer an opinion on the subject, but the need in which he stood of her good offices compelled him to restrain it; bitterly regretting however, the discovery of his character, into which intoxication had betrayed him, he determined to pay a visit Merrion-square, and exculpate himself from any share of blame by throwing it entirely on his companions, hoping that, from Charles's having been so inebriated, he would be unable either to discredit or disprove his assertions.

In the course of the day, therefore, he called at Merrion-square; and, on being admitted into the hall, desired to be shewn to young Montague's room.

"My master, sir," replied Kennedy, who

had opened the door, "forbid me to allow any person to go to his room, and I cannot disobey his orders."

In vain Sir Townly argued, commanded, and even attempted to bribe the man to admit him. Kennedy, sincerely attached to his master, and detesting Sir Townly's conduct, of which he had, in the course of his attendance on Charles, heard a very ample detail, positively declared he would not offend his master, or disobey his orders; adding, with very little ceremony, he would not do it for any man, much less for him.

Sir Townly, enraged at what he considered such intolerable insolence, was going, in the first heat of passion, to strike the man; but, recollecting how incumbent it was on him to preserve his temper, he checked himself, and forcing a laugh, told him he was an honest fellow, and he would not fail to tell his master so.

Kennedy smiled contemptuously, but made no reply; and Sir Townly then asked if Mr. Montague was at home, as he wished to speak to him.

"Yes, sir," replied Kennedy, readily, as Mr. Montague had given no orders to be denied to Sir Townly; and internally enjoying the idea of exposing him to the treatment which he thought it not unlikely Mr. Montague would, in his present temper and feelings, be very well pleased at such an opportunity of giving him: then, leading the way, ushered Sir Townly into the drawing-room, where Mr. Montague was sitting.

Sir Townly, without seeming to notice that Mr. Montague scarcely returned his salutation, advanced towards him, expressing his regret for the unfortunate accident that had occurred, protesting, on his honour, he had been so little master of himself, as to be unable to restrain his companions from attacking the watch; and that how it happened, or how he got home, he could not tell: but he hoped Mr. Montague could not suspect him of such base and dishonourable conduct as that of forsaking his friend in such a situation.

"I have made no such charge against you, sir," cried Mr. Montague, haughtily; "nor has my son entered into any detail with me

of what has passed. How he could have been seduced into conduct so utterly disgraceful to the character of a gentleman, I must confess myself surprised; though I am far from being displeased that he has been taught, so early in his career, to form a correct estimate of the friendships of those who delight in leading a novice into mischief, and then basely leave him the victim to the resentment which they had provoked."

It required all Sir Townly's insolence and dissimulation to withstand this severe reproof; but, without appearing to feel it, he merely expressed his sorrow at a transaction, to which he was an unconscious party."

Mr. Montague, disdaining any farther reply to a man so utterly devoid of shame, listened to him in silence; and Sir Townly finding how little progress he was making in the object for which he had designed his visit, after a few general compliments and remarks, took his leave to consult with Mrs. Talbot; and Mr. Montague, immediately sending for his servants, said he would not, in future, be at home to Sir Townly Beauchamp.

In consequence of Sir Townly's visit and representations to Mrs. Talbot, she came immediately to Merrion-square; and, well versed in the art of acting her part to advantage, she appeared so shocked at what had occurred, so warmly censured her brother, expressed such abhorrence of his conduct, and so artfully lamented his having been, as his servants declared, utterly insensible of what he was doing, that Mr. Montague was convinced that she viewed the affair precisely as he did, though wishing, if possible, to offer some extenuation of her brother's conduct. As Fanny, instructed by Mrs. Talbot, took no sort of part, nor expressed the displeasure she felt at hearing Sir Townly so severely censured, her father was induced to believe that she was indifferent on the subject; and, fatally blind to Mrs. Talbot's hypocrisy, and ignorant of her real character, which no circumstance had led him to suspect, he considered a woman of her rank and fashion as a perfectly proper *chaperone* for his daughter, and therefore made no objection to Fanny's going into public with her during her mother's present confinement.

Such was the natural strength of Charles's constitution, unimpaired by vice or dissipation, that in a few days he recovered from the fever into which he had been thrown; and, though still confined to his room, he was enabled to leave his bed. Mrs. Montague, recovering her spirits, assisted Mr. Montague, Sidney, Anna, and Mr. Savage, in their united efforts to entertain him, and to lighten the tedium of a confinement, which, to his active mind, was an almost severer calamity than the pain and illness that he had suffered.

Charles, learning from Mr. Savage that Mr. Montague had finally settled the affair of the assault, the men gladly consenting to give up the prosecution on receiving the reparation they demanded for the injuries which they stated themselves to have received, felt all that gratitude to his father which his delicacy had so well merited, in never once reproaching him, though he well knew, from his disposition, that he must have been greatly and justly offended; and in sparing no expense to save him from public disgrace. Taking advantage

of the first opportunity that offered of being alone with Mr. Montague, he warmly thanked him for such uncommon kindness, assuring him that no punishment or disgrace could have so effectually tended to restrain him in future from any conduct that might offend him; and he voluntarily pledged his honour never hereafter to keep up any farther intercourse with Sir Townly Beauchamp than their unavoidably meeting in public must occasion.

Delighted to be spared from the necessity of reproving a son whom he so fondly loved, Mr. Montague received Charles's apology with all the tenderness it deserved; desiring him to wave any farther mention of so disagreeable a transaction, and which he should himself remember only with pleasure as a convincing proof of his ingeniousness.

As it had been announced to the numerous acquaintance of the Montague family that young Montague was confined with a slight fever, and as Sir Townly carefully concealed the truth, no suspicion was entertained of what had occurred; and therefore Fanny's

appearing in public with Mrs. Talbot did not excite those remarks it would otherwise have occasioned.

No other member of the family left the house, except to take an occasional airing in the park; and no visitors were admitted, except Mr. Savage and Mr. Ingram, who, in the characters of intimate friends, spent almost every evening at Merrion-square; but, as Charles would not appear to the latter while any vestige remained of the ill usage he had received, he left him to be entertained by his father and Miss Watkins, and sat in a back drawing-room with Mr. Savage and the rest of the family; all, excepting Mrs. Montague, equally well pleased to escape Mr. Ingram.

On observing Sidney's wish to avoid his society, Mr. Ingram began to apprehend what had never before occurred to him, that she was not, perhaps, so desirous to accept the wealth which he was so well inclined to offer to her acceptance. He had but a few years before come into the possession of the family fortune, by the death of an elder brother; and as he had, in early life, been too

much occupied, by his profession, to think of speculating in matrimony, he had preserved his heart from any dangerous impression till the age of forty-five; when, without calculating what chance there might be of the ultimate success of his pursuit, he had weakly suffered himself to indulge in all the enthusiasm of a romantic passion for a girl so infinitely his junior; and whose beauty, and situation in life, did not render it very probable that she would feel so well disposed as thousands of other women are to sacrifice at the shrine of wealth, a possession too dearly purchased, when the best feelings of the heart are immolated to its attainment.

Self was the idol Mr. Ingram had through life worshipped; and his love, as selfish as his other feelings had ever been, now stimulated him to secure the accomplishment of his wishes, without a moment's reflexion on the cruelty there would be in opposing the inclinations and destroying the happiness of others to suit his own purposes.

Whether Sidney's heart was yet engaged, or only insensible, now became an object of con-

templation; and, between Mr. Savage and Charles, his jealousy vibrated. But more accurate observation convincing him, that, though Savage admired Sidney, he was not in love with her; and that, though she liked him as a companion, she was perfectly insensible to any other feeling in his favour; Charles was the person on whom his suspicions entirely rested. Her care and anxiety about him, her confining herself to the house to enliven his solitude, the alarm she had betrayed at his danger, and Charles's peculiar warmth of manner, all served to convince him that he was the man who must be supplanted before he had any chance of gaining her affections, or at least of acquiring her hand.

What probability there was of Charles's obtaining his father's consent to an union with his cousin, Mr. Ingram next debated; and he knew the world too well to be long in doubt, that, whatever admiration Mr. Montague felt for his niece, to her becoming his daughter he would have the strongest objections. Well acquainted with the state of his affairs, he knew he would require ready money, not only to pay

off the 10,000*l*. settled on his younger children, but also to defray heavy debts which he had incurred in building the house of Belle Vue, and improving his grounds; and that, to answer such demands, a litigated property, that might be for years in the courts, would be very inadequate; more particularly when its whole amount, if free and undisputed, would scarcely do more than pay off his daughters' fortunes.

Perfectly satisfied, therefore, that in his father Charles would meet no friend on this occasion, his next plan was to secure that friendship for himself, and to dispose him not only to second, but even to exert his authority in his favour; and the perfidious scheme at length occurred of still farther increasing his aversion to the prospect of such a marriage for his son, by insinuating a fear that Sidney's property would not be so easily recovered as he had at first been led to believe. As the Hamiltons spared no expense, stopped at no expedient, however base and illiberal, and employed the most elaborate subtlety in support of their unjust claims, he soon, with every colour of truth, impressed Mr. Montague with

the apprehension that many years would elapse before Sidney could recover her property; and that it was even possible she might ultimately fail. In short he craftily imbued his mind with anxious solicitude for the future welfare of a niece who became every day more deservedly dear to him, though he forbore to grieve and alarm her by communicating his fears.

Mr. Ingram was, however, too cautious and circumspect to drop any hint of his views and wishes : his first object was, that Mr. Montague should become thoroughly convinced of the desperate state of Sidney's affairs, and he trusted to that, for the infallible consequence of his employing every means to prevent her union with his son. As he observed that Mr. Montague entertained no suspicion of such an attachment, he, therefore, resolved to wait some time, and watch Charles's movements, before he finally declared himself; while Sidney, delighted to escape from his attentions, which were extremely disagreeable to her, and perfectly ignorant of his communi-

cations to her uncle, fondly cherished the hope of being at length united to Sedley.

The man who could have resigned so beautiful and apparently so amiable a woman as Mrs. Monk with such perfect indifference as he had done must have been a very accurate observer of character; this proved that, however his youthful imagination might have been inflamed, his heart was not very easily touched; and the strength and constancy of his attachment to Captain Elmore demonstrated that his affections, when once won, were unalterably steady. How then could she fear his constancy? His had not been the mere admiration of a moment, the transient ebullition of boyish fancy, delighting to pour forth its turgid strains to the object of exaggerated passion; he had never flattered, never sought to bewilder her judgment; and his feelings, he had evinced, were too keen and ardent to evaporate in words. After an intimate acquaintance, and patient investigation of her character and disposition, he had in a moment of high-wrought energy declared to be such as realized

his every wish and hope: and his sufferings, on finding he had been deceived in expecting her friends' approbation, had indisputably proved his sincerity. She therefore persevered in cherishing those sentiments, which, without militating against duty, soothed her feelings, and enabled her to enjoy something like peace:—and Sedley's image remained deeply as ever engraven on her heart.

CHAP. XII.

One morning that Charles was so far recovered as to go out in the carriage with his father, and as Mrs. Montague, Miss Watkins, and the girls, were sitting together in the drawing-room, a servant announced Mrs. Hervey, who had frequently called, but had been denied admission, during the period of young Montague's confinement.

After expressing great pleasure at seeing her, Mrs. Montague apologized for having been so long without returning her visits, from her mind having been so much occupied by her son's illness, that she had not been able to go out, nor to see her friends at home.

To these apologies Mrs. Hervey replied, by relating her sorrow at hearing of her dear young friend's indisposition, and her delight at learning he was so much recovered; and then

asked if she had seen Mrs. Elverton since her arrival in town.

Mrs. Montague replied it had been out of her power to wait on Mrs. Elverton, as she had not heard of her being in town till the period of her son's illness, and had not since been able to leave the house: but, requested Mrs. Elverton's address, as she would visit her on the ensuing day.

Mrs. Hervey complied with her desire; and then said, "Ah Mrs. Montague, I am sure you will be concerned to hear what a miserable match she has made,—worse a great deal than I ever suspected; for, though I knew he had no fortune, I did not think him such a bad man as I have found him."

"I am extremely concerned to hear you say so," cried Mrs. Montague; "I have always considered Mr. Elverton as a very frivolous character; but I sincerely hope you have not in any instance found it worse."

"It was no wonder you were deceived," exclaimed Mrs. Hervey; "no person could have believed him such a designing base person as I have found him; but I will tell you

all: it quite relieves me to speak freely to so kind a friend."

Mrs. Montague bowed, and Mrs. Hervey continued: "You may recollect, the last day I had the pleasure of seeing you at Belle Vue, Mr. Montague advised me to consult my friends, and try what could be done; so I came immediately to town, and spoke to a gentleman, an intimate friend and near relation of my own, by whose means I at length discovered where Eliza lived; and, as my friend advised me to see and speak to Eliza before he took any step in the affair, I went early the next morning to her lodgings, and found them at breakfast. I was so much displeased with Eliza, I could not at first speak of business, but upbraided her severely for her conduct; when Elverton saucily told me, he did not approve of my speaking in such a manner to his wife; and requested I would forbear any farther comments on the subject. I was so intolerably provoked at his insolence, after all the fawning civility he used to shew me, that I could not refrain from telling him what I thought, and accusing him of inveigling away

my niece, and destroying her excellent prospects of making a more suitable connexion. He flew into such a passion that he really terrified me; and had the audacity to desire me never again to enter his house, nor presume to treat him in such a manner. I then became cool, and, remembering the purpose for which I had come, I asked Eliza what settlement had been made of her fortune; when Elverton replied, with a malicious smile, "he and Eliza had married for love, and therefore they had not thought of making any. I could not restrain myself on hearing him say this; but told him, that, if Eliza had been fool enough to marry for love, it was pretty evident what had been his motive. Eliza now became quite affronted at my saying that Elverton could have any other motive for marrying her than love; and spoke almost as impertinently to me as Elverton himself, who again told me he would dispense with my visits in future, since I came for no other purpose than to create discord between him and his wife. I could bear all this no longer, and leaving them, went to my friend to inform him of what had passed; when he had the inhumanity to say

that I was very wrong in speaking to either in such terms, as that could now answer no purpose. At my request, however, he called himself on Elverton, and said every thing he could suggest to induce him to make a fair and honourable settlement of Eliza's fortune; but in vain. Elverton refused to make any, or to enter at all on the subject. Now, my dear Mrs. Montague, did you ever hear of any thing so wicked? To refuse to settle any part of a girl's fortune on herself, though I understand he has not a shilling of his own in the world."

"I am surprised, I am grieved, indeed," said Mrs. Montague; "but, perhaps, when Mr. Elverton has had time to reflect on the impropriety of his conduct, he may be induced to make such an arrangement as honour and justice demand."

"Oh, no," cried Mrs. Hervey, "I have no hopes of him; for, though he forbade Eliza to speak to me, I have met her at a friend's house, and, as her eyes were at length opened to his conduct, on finding he would not act as her friends wished, she resented his refusal, and accused him of deceiving her; when he flew

into a most outrageous fury, and scolded her in the grossest terms ; and has, ever since, she told me, been so peevish and ill natured, that she heartily repents her folly : but I knew at the time she would do that."

Mrs. Hervey's passion having exhausted her, she remained silent, and Mrs. Montague gently represented the danger of disgusting Mrs. Elverton with a man, who was not only her husband, but on whom her own imprudence had rendered her wholly dependent. Mrs. Hervey feeling no pleasure or relief except in abusing Elverton, was rather offended by these hints, and soon took her leave.

The moment she was gone, Fanny, bursting into a malicious laugh, said she could not have supposed Mr. Elverton would have so soon thrown off the lover ; though she had ever known that he had admired Miss Flowerdale's fortune infinitely more than herself.

" He always appeared to me a frivolous, empty coxcomb, " said Mrs. Montague, " but of such dishonourable designs I could not have suspected him ; and I am sincerely

sorry that poor Eliza Flowerdale has thrown herself and her fortune so lamentably away."

"Well now, mamma," exclaimed Fanny, "I wonder how you can pity her; could any woman, who was not a fool, have believed Elverton serious, in all the ridiculous fuss he used to make about her?"

"She was always a very weak girl," said Mrs. Montague, in a tone of compassion, "and that is the reason that I must pity her for the severe fate she has incurred."

"She has not done quite so well, certainly," said Fanny, laughing, "as if her aunt could have persuaded Charles to have married her; though, perhaps," added she, glancing her eyes towards Sidney, "Charles may yet repent that he did not take more pains to secure her. A vain fool with a fortune is better at any time than a vain fool without one."

Sidney colouring indignantly at this gross sneer, Mrs. Montague looked at her for a moment with fixed attention, and then, withdrawing her eyes, remained silent, buried in deep thought. During the remainder of the day her manner to Sidney was visibly altered; but, well ac-

customed to such inconsistencies in her conduct, they did not give her the vexation they had formerly excited; nor did she needlessly torment herself to discover the cause, being convinced that Mrs. Montague was, in almost every instance respecting her, alternately guided by her son or her daughter.

Mrs. Montague's time was now much occupied in the important task of ordering and superintending dresses for the drawing-room, at which Sidney and Anna were to be presented; and, as Sidney's finances were so contracted as to render it an expense she was not very equal to incur, Mr. Montague made it his request to Mrs. Montague that she would present her with a dress fit for that occasion; to which Charles added a very beautiful pearl ornament for her head, and gave Anna a full suit.

This present, though given by Charles, and received by Sidney in the most public manner, again excited Mrs. Montague's jealous apprehensions of his entertaining a partiality for his cousin. Fanny was at that time extremely desirous to occupy his mother's mind upon any other

subject than herself, in order that she might not discover her encouragement of Sir Townly Beauchamp's addresses, and these she did not wish to have suspected till she had brought matters to a final conclusion, which her love of admiration, and her pride in displaying such a man in her train, prevented her from hastening so much as he desired. She therefore made use of the above circumstance still farther to increase her mother's suspicions; and Sidney perceived that the kind and attentive tenderness with which Mrs. Montague had treated her, since the period of Charles's danger and subsequent illness, was now succeeded by a greater degree of reserve, and even more marked dislike, than she had yet shewn her.

To Fanny she with justice attributed this change; but, thinking it impossible that, after what had so recently passed between her and Sedley, Mrs. Montague could again give way to such a fear, she did not suspect the cause. Though grieved and surprised at the effect, her uneasiness she was obliged to confine to her own breast; as Charles, anxious to atone to

his mother for the recent unhappiness he had made her suffer, could not endure to notice what might give her pain; and Anna had not a thought, except of the pleasure she expected from commencing her career in the fashionable world.

This important day having at length arrived, Anna, who had not been ready to go out with her mother and Fanny, came into Sidney's room, where she was arranging her dress; and, telling her that her mother had forgotten her lappets, asked her if she would go with her to the milliner's, whither Charles had promised to escort her.

Sidney gladly complied with her request; and leaving what yet remained to be finished of her dress to Mrs. Montague's woman, who had offered her assistance, she set out with Anna, Charles, and Mr. Savage.

They had not proceeded half way down the square when they were met by Sir Townly Beauchamp and young Hamilton. Sir Townly, who had not seen Charles since the night of a party by which he had been so severe a

sufferer, being extremely anxious to reinstate himself in his favour, approached, and, slightly bowing to Sidney and Anna, held out his hand to Charles, exclaiming, " I am very glad to see you, Montague! That was a cursed unlucky business that took place the other night; but I hope you do me the justice to believe, that, if I had not been so confoundedly done up, I would have sent the rascals to the devil before they should have treated you in such a way."

Charles, disdaining to evince any displeasure for a desertion he internally despised, did not refuse Sir Townly's offered hand; and, haughtily returning Mr. Hamilton's bow, replied, cavalierly, " If I had not been so counfoundedly done up myself, as you term it, Sir Townly, I should not have required your assistance; but I should recommend it to you to be more assured of your own party, and better convinced that your antagonists are not so well prepared for resistance, before you again venture such another attack."

" Aye, aye," cried Hamilton, " that is true,

but why could you not do as we did, and shew them a light pair of heels?"

"Perhaps," said Montague, contemptuously, "had you been knocked down before you were aware of the intentions of your party, you would not have found that so easy a resource, however accustomed to trust to your heels for your safety."

Hamilton, though nettled by this sneer, did not think proper to avow his resentment; but replied, there was no man who would think it a disgrace to run away from a set of rascally watchmen; adding, "What do you think if we make a party to-night, to give them a good drubbing for their insolence; eh, Sir Townly? will it not be a famous plan of revenge?"

Sir Townly hesitated what reply to give, till better assured of Charles's sentiments: Charles, despising the mean and cowardly proposal of overpowering a set of men, in the discharge of their duty, by the mere force of numbers, replied, rather disdainfully, "Take what revenge you please for yourselves, gentlemen; but, the next time that I engage in war-

fare, I shall be prepared to defend myself, and I shall not then fear being left without a very willing assistant."

"With all my heart," cried Hamilton; "if you have no desire to punish those gentry, we surely may be satisfied; for, as our retreat was skilfully effected, we escaped from either fines or blows."

An orange-woman, who had been following them within hearing, now slily said, "Aye, aye, master, that is the best way; always better to run like a man than be beat like a dog."

Enraged by her insinuation, Hamilton was going to reply very angrily, but Charles, laughing at his rage, cried out "She only recommends your own code, of trusting to a light pair of heels for safety."

"Aye, true enough, master," cried the woman, offering her oranges to Charles; "and, may be, for all the fierce look of his honour, he'd flinch his man faster than those that don't look half so big."

Hamilton, enraged beyond endurance at this second insult, was only withheld from

some violence on the poor woman's basket by Sir Townly Beauchamp; while Charles, purchasing some of her fruit as a reward for her humour, paid her so liberally, that charmed with his generosity, she said in a low voice, "The less you consort with those chaps the better, your honour: they are both as well known as Nelson's pillar; and that not for going to church."

Charles, not choosing to encourage her any farther, hastily quitted her, and walked down the street, accompanied by Sir Townly and Hamilton: Sir Townly seeking, by every means he could devise, to reinstate himself in Charles's favour; while Hamilton, offended by his manner, devoted his attention to Sidney, whom he had hitherto left unnoticed, except by a slight bow; asking her when she intended again to visit his mother and sisters.

Sidney replied coldly, that her time was so much occupied, she had very little leisure for morning visits; adding, she hoped her aunt and the Miss Hamiltons were well.

"Yes, I believe so," cried Hamilton, care-

lessly; " but I have not seen them these three days."

Sir Townly perceiving, by Charles' manner, that, though he did not, like his father, openly avow his resentment, his sentiments of what had passed were precisely similar, determined to take no farther trouble to gain his friendship, but trust entirely to his influence with Fanny; and taking Hamilton's arm, who was equally weary of the party, wished them good morning.

Mr. Savage, who had not spoken to either of the gentlemen, now said, with a laugh, " Hamilton, I perceive, has benefitted by Sir Townly's instructions. Were he not so anxious to render himself conspicuous, I should pity him for his folly, as he has, I understand, paid pretty dearly for the honour of his acquaintance; but, as he is content to be his humble copyist and profound admirer, he must only take his chance; and, from what I can learn, bids very fair to be the worthy pupil of so able a master."

" Let us choose some other subject," cried Charles, hastily; " they are neither of them

worth even animadversion: then added, in a whisper, "Hamilton is a cousin of Sidney's; and, though she despises him, she might not, perhaps, like to hear him so openly censured."

On reaching the milliner's, they perceived Mr. and Mrs. Elverton, who was busily employed in examining the newest assortment of fashions. Charles, eagerly advancing to Mrs. Elverton, congratulated her, with all his former extravagance of compliment, on her marriage; and then, with great archness and raillery, addressed himself to Elverton, declaring that his spirit and ingenuity deserved the success they had achieved; and gravely asking why he had not intrusted him with his intentions, as he should have been most happy to have offered his services on the occasion.

Mr. Elverton, though evidently disconcerted at the meeting, forced a laugh, saying he had stood in no need of assistance; and, anxious to change the subject, asked him when he had heard from Sedley or Elmore.

"Not since I left the country," replied Charles, in his turn disconcerted by the inquiry.

"Really," replied Elverton, "I am surprised to hear you say so. I understand, from French, they have returned to C——; and he tells me Sedley is so altered you would scarcely know him. French thinks he has quarrelled with his father; but, as they never were good friends, I cannot suppose that would have any great effect on his spirits. French says," added he, with a smile of much meaning, "that he fancies Sedley must be in love; for, instead of joining their parties as usual, he avoids them as much as possible, and devotes all his time to reading. That certainly looks suspicious; and, what is even a worse symptom, he cannot bear the slightest raillery; had it not been for Colonel Coote's interference, he and French would have fired a pistol the other day. Who the lady may be, no one exactly knows but Elmore, as he continues to be his bosom friend and confidant."

To this speech Sidney listened with eager attention, anxious to gather some information respecting Sedley; but, feeling greatly agitated by its conclusion, she took up some lace, and

appeared entirely occupied in its examination; while Charles, recovering his presence of mind, replied, that he was glad to hear poor Sedley had so sincere a friend, and then again turned to Mrs. Elverton. Her husband not choosing to share in his farther raillery, strolled to another part of the room.

To his and Anna's congratulations Mrs. Elverton replied with pettishness; and shewed so little satisfaction in the event that had called them forth, that Mr. Savage, who had listened to Charles's *outrée* compliments in silent wonder, advanced to Sidney, and said, in a low voice, "Have that gentleman and lady been long married?"

"About two months, I believe," said Sidney, scarcely suppressing a sigh at the recollection of how totally her own happiness had been destroyed within that period.

"It was a love-match, I fancy, from what Montague has been saying," cried Mr. Savage, smiling; "and yet the honey-moon has not, I perceive, exceeded the limited period."

"I know not, indeed," replied Sidney;

"but it is not easy to endure Charles's provoking raillery with perfect good humour."

"If I may venture to judge from appearances," said Mr. Savage, "interest and folly have united to forge the marriage chains. Your catch-matches, after all, do not, in general, turn out very fortunate; and it is no wonder that men or women of any sense or feeling are so anxious to avoid them."

"Oh, surely," cried Sidney, speaking with involuntary warmth, "they are, and must be, deservedly wretched."

Mr. Savage looked at her for a moment, as if to discern whether she indeed spoke her genuine sentiments; when, perceiving her colour quickly rise at her unguarded warmth, he said nothing more on the subject, and they soon after quitted the shop.

The hurry of dressing, the novelty of the scene, the timidity and apprehension inseparable from a first appearance in public, for a while overpowered all other thoughts than those they naturally inspired; but, the moment she was left alone, Castle finery and vice-regal

magnificence faded from Sidney's recollection, and the intelligence she had learned from Mr. Elverton wholly occupied her mind. That it was exaggerated she could not doubt, from the natural reserve and fortitude of Sedley's character, and from the inclination Elverton had always shewn to sneer at the major, whose dislike, of his foppery and pertness, he had returned with interest; and as Sedley did not, like French, lay himself open to reprisals, Elverton recompensed himself for the forbearance he was obliged to practise in his presence, by openly avowing his sentiments in his absence.

A wish to turn him into ridicule, therefore, joined to a desire of escaping from Charles's sarcastic jokes, by directing his attention to another object, she knew must have been the motives for his officious information; but, with every allowance for spleen and ill nature, she could not doubt, that Sedley was greatly altered, since he had so wholly lost the command he had formerly held over his temper, as to subject himself to French's sneers, and then to resent them with a violence so little

consonant to his general character and conduct. "Ah!" thought she, "when justly wounded pride sustained his fortitude, the struggle, however hard, was decisive; but now that the rectitude and generosity of his own heart compels him to acquit me for acting consistently with duty and propriety: his tenderness and warmth of disposition have rendered him unequal to the task."

To reward his affection, was her first and dearest wish; and, ignorant of the proceedings of the Hamilton family, and of her uncle's fears, she looked forward with hope and pleasure to the period when the recovery of her fortune would enable her to bestow happiness on one so truly deserving.

CHAP. XIII.

The numbers of fashionables crowding to town for the drawing-room, occasioned such a constant succession of parties, that scarcely a day elapsed that the Montagues had not company at home or were not engaged abroad; and, as a new face is an universal relief to those already weary of what they have been in the habit of seeing, Sidney's beauty, polished manners, and gentle good-breeding, however obscured by melancholy, did not fail to attract the admiration they were so well calculated to inspire, particularly among those so long accustomed to the same hacknied routine of artificial character, studied graces, and false glare of self-created loveliness. Wherever she appeared there was a set of young men ready to flutter in her train, from having heard her pronounced to be a most beautiful girl by those arbiters of fashionable taste on whom

they relied; and from the desire of being on intimate terms with a family who had so general and splendid an acquaintance as the Montagues. There were but few of the young men thus ready to follow and offer their adulation who were not in their hearts predetermined to be guarded against the attractions of the too lovely, though portionless, heiress; yet it would have required all Sidney's firmness of mind to have been proof against the incense they so assiduously offered to her charms, had not her heart been secured by a fervour of attachment that rendered all others alike indifferent.

This constant round of dissipation, though it wearied Sidney, yet incessantly engaged her attention; and, though it in no degree weakened the strength of her passion, it insensibly blunted her sorrow by diverting her thoughts into other channels.

Mr. Ingram's rage at beholding the woman he had appropriated to himself, and whose situation rendered that design so little likely to be interrupted, become an object of general attention, forced him from the cir-

cumspect policy he had planned. Circumstances at this period took a turn more favourable to his wishes than he had dared to hope, for perceiving that Charles was disposed to amuse himself, without paying Sidney more than general and good-natured attention; and that Mr. Savage did not display any symptoms of being a professed candidate for her favour, however intimacy might hereafter induce such a step, he determined to run no farther risk of defeating his schemes, by suffering himself to be supplanted by his tardy but more youthful rivals.

One morning, therefore, about a fortnight after her presentation, Mr. Montague, desiring to speak to her in private, made her a formal tender of Mr. Ingram's hand, informing her that he had been commissioned to assure her, that, perfectly indifferent to every pecuniary consideration, settlements more splendid than, even were she undisputed mistress of her own fortune, her friends would be entitled to demand, awaited her acceptance; together with his eternal gratitude if she would condescend to share that wealth,

which was otherwise insufficient to his happiness.

To this pompous and ostentatious though not quite unexpected proposal, Sidney, without a moment's hesitation, requested her uncle would give an absolute refusal; declaring, that no wealth, no splendour, should ever induce her to marry a man whose manners and disposition were so wholly repugnant to her feelings.

"Sidney, my dear," said Mr. Montague, gravely, "this is not acting with your usual sense and prudence. Ingram is a man of highly respectable family and unblemished character; his years are not such as to render the connexion either disagreeable or improper; his fortune beyond that, which although mistress your own estate, you would be entitled to expect: what then can you rationally urge as an objection against an union in every respect eligible and advantageous?"

"I cannot, sir," cried Sidney, blushing, "more precisely state my objections than I have already done. Mr. Ingram is your friend, and therefore I should dislike to be more explicit; yet, with my present feelings towards

him, I could not marry him; and do not, I entreat, my dearest uncle, ask me to think of forming such a connexion."

"As your uncle, your guardian, and your friend, Sidney," exclaimed Mr. Montague, warmly, "I cannot suffer you so wantonly, so childishly, to trifle with your establishment in life. Tenderness has withheld me from mentioning the real state of your affairs; but a warm interest in your future welfare now compels me to say, without disguise, that the recovery of your property is scarcely to be expected. Ingram has long had doubts of being able to force the Hamiltons to resign it, and within the last few days they have taken a step which I fear will secure it theirs in spite of all opposition. They have produced a deed of your great grandfather Forbes's, made in favour of your late uncle Hamilton; thus depriving your uncle Forbes of the power of bequeathing Wood-Lawn. This deed Ingram hopes to prove a forgery, though I rather fancy he says so from motives of delicacy, as the other lawyers are of opinion that Hamilton will establish it; they appear to rest their only

hope on discovering your grandfather's will, to ascertain what power he gave to your uncle Forbes; and this Counsellor Walsh has a faint expectation of being enabled to do through the medium of the English Court of Records, as in that kingdom old Mr. Forbes died; yet, I must warn you that our success is impossible if Hamilton can prove the deed valid. Thus situated, my dear Sidney, you must take time to weigh and consider circumstances, before you are even competent to give so decided an answer. Ingram requested you might not be hurried, nor have I any desire you should be precipitate; but I shall in this instance expect the same excellent sense that you have shewn on every other occasion."

The shock of this intelligence, that so cruelly blasted hopes Sidney had so fondly cherished, so completely overset her fortitude, that she sat silent without attempting to reply, till Mr. Montague, taking her silence as an assent to his advice, thanked her for her compliance; when she exerted herself to say, "You mistake me, uncle—I am grieved, indeed, at what you have told me, but no motions of that

kind shall induce me to become Mr. Ingram's wife."

"Sidney," cried Mr. Montague, "I will have no romance: it is impossible to urge any objection to Ingram but the mere wayward caprice of girlish fancy; and such an objection neither your sense nor situation entitle you to make. Reflect on your present circumstances, depending on the issue of a complicated, and most skilfully litigated, suit for independence. Entitled by your birth, and accustomed from your infancy, to move in the higher ranks of society, are you to suffer the mere objection of a few years' difference in age to induce you, rashly and weakly to reject a proper, and splendid settlement? You may, perhaps, think, that with your beauty, youth, and accomplishments you must receive as eligible and more agreeable offers. In forming such expectations, I do not wish to wound your feelings by asserting that you will find yourself deceived. The present state of society imperatively commands the strictest attention to prudence; and those who wilfully neglect its dictates severely lament their folly; nor would you be less

likely than other women to feel and regret the consequences of suffering romantic ideas to cloud your understanding, and destroy your establishment in life, by acting in direct contradiction to your own interest, and the wishes of an uncle who is as anxious for your happiness as he could be for that of a daughter."

On concluding these words Mr. Montague quitted the room, to leave Sidney at liberty to reflect on the intelligence he had given her, to enable her to regulate her thoughts, and to bring her mind to that ready acquiescence in his wishes which he expected.

This was an exertion altogether beyond her fortitude. The afflicting conviction that she and Sedley were for ever separated so occupied her mind as to render her incapable of reflecting on the added misery of poverty and dependence, by which the separation was accompanied; and no thought of Ingram occurred except a momentary start of horror and detestation at the idea of accepting his proferred hand.

In this state of acute, yet almost undefinable anguish, she was yet sitting in the

library, when the door was opened by Charles, who, startled by the still despair of her look, hastily demanded what had occurred to distress her.

To this inquiry Sidney was for some moments too much agitated to reply; but, when calmed by his kind and affectionate manner, she informed him, without reserve, of all that had passed between her and her uncle; concluding in these words, "Do not, my dearest Charles, accuse me of folly, or wilful disobedience to my uncle's wishes, when I tell you, it is my most decided resolution never to marry Mr. Ingram. There is no misery I would not endure in preference to becoming his wife."

"His wife," repeated Charles, indignantly, "you never shall be. If the Hamiltons will perjure themselves, will wade through infamy to rob you of Wood-Lawn, let them; but the wife of such an antiquated, formal old prig, I never could endure to see you. A girl of your beauty, family, and accomplishments need never despair of forming a connexion, if not quite so wealthy, yet, in every other instance, more eligible. Banish him, therefore, from

your thoughts, and trust to me for settling the affair with my father."

Sidney's gratitude for this most seasonable offer of kindness and assistance, which Charles had so opportunely made, she could not find words to express, she could only weep her thanks; till Charles; affected by her distress, took so much pains to sooth her, that he at length succeeded; when, apprehensive that he would offend her uncle, if he expressed the same contempt for Mr. Ingram which he so openly avowed to her, she besought him to be prudent, and not, from regard to her, involve himself in a dispute with his father.

"Prithee, my dear Sidney," cried he, gaily, "don't terrify yourself with phantoms:—my father and I are not very likely to quarrel, nor have I the slightest wish to offend him. Such conduct would not be very grateful after all his late kindness to me: which, little as I have said on the subject, I shall never forget."

Be assured by this declaration, Sidney thanked him with animated fervour.

"Don't arrogate all sort of merit to yourself alone," cried he, laughing; "it is very pretty

to be grateful, I confess, but it is a virtue which you are not called on to practise just now, as I am not even repaying the gratitude I owe you for all the care you took of me during my illness; and, what I felt a thousand times more, all your attention to my mother. Fanny may warp her for the moment, but she too will assist me to defeat the wise calculations of our plodding and methodical Lawyer. Do not, however, expect the superlative honour of my support, without paying me the compliment of being sometimes guided by my advice. Instead, therefore, of pining and grieving for what may perhaps never happen, and what that prosing politician may perhaps have said merely to sound you, laugh at him and his threats—shew him that you despise his offers, and have no fears, fortune or no fortune, of not doing better. For my part I will torment him without mercy, Savage will gladly yield his aid; and we will together laugh and quiz him into contented silence; whereas, if you appear grieved or terrified, he will only conclude that you are hesitating between his ugly phiz and his long purse; and

that, as in most other cases, gold being the heaviest, will turn the balance in his own favour; he will follow you, like your shadow, in humble expectation of being at length rewarded for his pains. He will continually torment your uncle to give him his assistance; and, though my father, to do him justice, is one of the best men in the world, yet, like all other men of his years, he likes to look at what he calls the realities of life. From pure disinterested affection to you, he will feel anxious to have you, what, perhaps, with his present opinion of your situation, he may consider, eligibly settled in life; though, most undoubtedly, the splendour which can't be enjoyed is not worth accepting; and, with such a millstone as my friend Counsellor Buckram hung round your neck, wealth could not afford happiness."

To the propriety of this advice, however flighty the manner in which it was given, Sidney could not be insensible; and though she would not even to Charles confess the genuine reason why she had been so dismayed by the threatened loss of her fortune she resolved

to disguise her sorrow and apprehensions, and, with assumed cheerfulness, promised to be guided by his advice, if he would avoid any conduct that could wantonly offend Mr. Ingram, and consequently her uncle.

"My dear girl," exclaimed Charles, laughing, "how wonderfully prompt you are in alarming yourself. Believe me, your hoary lover has not quite so much inflammability in his composition as you seem to apprehend; he will find his solemn gravity and measured periods so inadequate a match for what you may perhaps call my levity and Savage's sarcasms, that he will be extremely glad to decline the combat, and to yield the palm to those who will first laugh him off the field, and then laugh at him."

Sidney then, at his request, accompanied him out in his curricle, for which purpose he said he had originally come to seek her, till Ingram's darts and parchments had driven it from his recollection.

During their drive, Charles took every means which the most animated gaiety could render successful to banish from Sidney's mind the melancholy weight which seemed to oppress

her; and, meeting Mr. Savage on the road, in opposition to her earnest entreaties, he told him the whole circumstance, painting Mr. Ingram and his pretensions in the most ludicrous colours, and asking his assistance to laugh him into a retreat.

Charles in this detail avoided all mention of his father's name; but it did not require Savage's keen penetration to discern why he found it necessary to ask his aid on such an occasion; and, after turning the Counsellor and his presumption into as much ridicule as the subject would admit, they mutually agreed to torment him without cessation; though in such a way as to avoid offending Mr. Montague. Sidney, finding remonstrance and entreaty equally useless, allowed them to settle their plan of operations as they thought proper.

Mr. Savage, at Charles's request, readily accompanied them to Merrion-square to dinner, at which they were joined by Mr. Ingram, who now generally composed one of the family party. Without in the slightest degree adverting to the commission he had given to her uncle, he took a seat beside Sidney,

and attempted to enter into conversation with her.

On seeing him approach, Sidney grew pale; but, relying on Charles's promised assistance, she made a violent effort to control her feelings, and to affect an air of indifference.

Charles, who was turning over the leaves of a book on Mr. Ingram's entrance, continued his employment for a few moments, and then, carelessly strolling to where Sidney was sitting, threw himself on a chair next her, exclaiming, "What a horrid bore the study of antiquities must be! I have been poring over Kennet, Potter, and I don't know who, till I am perfectly stupefied. I hope, Sidney, that you have no passion for antiques of any kind; if you had, I would deny you for a relation of mine as I love every body and every thing youthful, modern, and dashing."

"I cannot say," replied Sidney, scarcely suppressing a smile at the inuendo he thus directed against Mr. Ingram's age, "that I feel prejudiced in favour of antiques: I am no judge of their value, and attach no sort of happiness to their possession."

" Bravo, Bravo! my pretty cousin," cried he; " I always knew you were a girl of taste and discernment."

" Pardon me for differing in opinion with you," said Mr. Savage, gravely: " an antique coin serves as a memorial of those celebrated actions, the relation of which we have perused with delight; an ancient castle, impressed with the venerable marks of age, is a fine object in a distant view; and even a countenance marked by the heavy fingers of time and wisdom points to the useful lesson of what we must become, it leads to the gravity suitable to such a period, and serves as a *memento mori* to check the exuberant spirits of youth: in short, age has it various uses and advantages, however remote it may be from inspiring us with gaiety, or from becoming the chosen companion of our mirthful and happy hours."

" Confound your moralizing," cried Charles, " what is it you mean to illustrate? Do you wish to prove that a veteran beau, like the eternal B——, shewing himself in every street and every party, smirking, smiling, and bowing to every pretty woman he sees, the toy and

fribble of every party he is among, wishing every spectator to forget the years that have rolled over his head, because he chooses himself to frisk under their weight, is either an useful, a respectable, or an entertaining member of society?"

"No," cried Mr. Savage, very gravely, "I meant no such arduous undertaking as to prove that misplaced efforts, or insidious views, should ever meet with any other results than the deserved disappointment and humiliation of those who employ such means to attain what, they should either have aspired to in youth, or have been content to resign with the philosophy which becomes a more advanced period of life. If the eternal B——, as you call him, instead of absurdly endeavouring to shine as a youthful beau, instead of aping the follies of boys young enough to be his sons, and vainly seeking for the admiration of girls young enough to be his grand-daughters, assumed the more appropriate character of an agreeable companion or instructive friend, then I should pronounce his age respectable, and his experience valuable; but at present he

can only serve to remind one of the grotesque appearance of an antique statue I have somewhere seen, where, with laughable incongruity, a new head was placed on an old body, and each seemed to wonder what brought the other here."

"The happiest, the most apposite simile I ever heard," cried Charles, immoderately diverted; "I did not suspect you, Savage, of studying this subject so philosophically. To what pretty ancient evergreen are you paying your addresses, that you have become so warm an admirer of age and gravity, when well and usefully employed?"

"In the character of an adviser," replied Savage, scarcely restraining a laugh, "I might perhaps, and I hope I should, respect a grandmother; but most certainly not in that of a mistress."

This conversation, apparently harmless and undesigning, but purposely intended to mortify and offend Mr. Ingram, had the desired effect. With a countenance lengthened beyond its usual gravity, by great though restrained anger and vexation, he vacated a

post which was no longer tenable, and joined Mr. Montague, who had listened in silent, though evident displeasure, to the provoking raillery which the two young men had directed against him.

Mrs. Montague and the family were that evening engaged to a ball at the house of a Mrs. Eccles; and as Mr. Ingram had declared his intention of making one of the party before Sidney left the dinner-table; Charles told her, in a whisper, if he asked her to dance with him, to plead a prior engagement, as both Savage and himself meant to offer their services on the occasion. Savage, he said, had requested he would intercede for him; and, if she met none other she liked better, to use his name as a barrier against Buckram.

With this injunction Sidney gladly determined to comply; and though annoyed at the idea that Mr. Savage should feel himself called on by Charles's application to shew her attention which did not emanate from his own feelings, yet, so circumstanced, she resolved not to interfere with their projects; and, since Charles had

voluntarily offered to become her mediator with his father, to suffer him to act as he pleased.

As Mrs. Montague had a previous engagement, they did not arrive at Mrs. Eccles' till it was extremely late, and Sidney instantly comprehended the prudence of Charles, as the moment she entered the ball-room Mr. Ingram applied for the honour of her hand.

On replying that she was engaged, Mr. Ingram, much disconcerted, formally, though politely, begged to know the name of the man who had been so happy as to supplant him even before her entrance into the room.

"Mr. Savage, sir," said Sidney, blushing at a recollection of all that had taken place, "engaged me before I left Merrion-square."

"Mr. Savage," cried Mr. Ingram, peevishly, "thinks himself authorized to take many liberties from the encouragement he receives from young Montague; but I could not suppose they would meet with Miss Montague's countenance: her sense, fully equal to her beauty, must warrant me in forming such a hope."

"I know not any circumstance, sir," replied

Sidney, coldly, "which can warrant you in forming a hope that I would reject the attention of any gentleman who is so intimate a friend of my cousins, nor do I at all understand the imputation that either Charles or myself have acted with impropriety."

"Pardon me," cried he, somewhat confounded, "I did not mean to imply any hint of impropriety; that is a term which could not be used where you are even indirectly alluded to; but there are circumstances that might flatter the hope of peculiar exclusion in favour of one individual."

"Your present hint, sir," said Sidney, "I neither can nor wish to misunderstand; and therefore I feel myself called on to assure you, that however honoured I must feel by your good opinion, and grateful for your friendship on many late occasions, my thanks are all I can offer in return."

Against this declaration Mr. Ingram was beginning to remonstrate, when the approach of Charles and Mr. Savage, arm in arm, compelled him to silence.

Mr. Savage, after apologizing for his delay,

which he said Montague had occasioned, begged leave to remind Sidney of the promise with which she had honoured him.

Sidney could not forbear blushing at being thus reminded of an engagement which she had not formed: but unable, at the moment, to enter into an explanation, she bowed her acquiescence.

"What are you and I to do with ourselves, Mr. Ingram?" cried Charles, with burlesque gravity; "are you engaged for this set?"

"I am not, sir," replied he, rather haughtily.

"We had better try our chance then," exclaimed Charles: "what do you think," continued he, looking round the room, "of trying yours with Miss Somerset? she looks so pretty and so modest, so like a prudent young lady just waiting to be asked, that I think, sir you could not do better than secure her: she is too mild, too demure, for me; I should infinitely prefer a little wild lively girl, with a head, heart, and heels, as giddy as my own."

"I should hope, Mr. Montague," said Mr. Ingram, with a degree of irritation which he vainly tried to modify, "you will do me the

honour of suffering me to choose for myself."

"Most undoubtedly," cried Charles, laughing, "that is a privilege to which every man in this land of freedom is entitled, unless his inclinations should happen to come in collision with those of some other person; if you and I therefore should unfortunately select the same lady, we must only put age and wisdom in one scale, youth and frolic into the other, and then see which will kick the balance; if I am doomed to go up, I will leave you in peace to enjoy your triumph."

"I should hope, sir," exclaimed Mr. Ingram, unable longer to command his indignation, "that the son of my best and oldest friend cannot purposely design to offend me."

"Offend my father's *oldest* and best friend," cried Charles, with resumed gravity, and laying a marked emphasis on the word oldest; "how, my dear Mr. Ingram, could you suspect me of such a design? or how, in that character, could your inclinations and mine so perversely clash, as to render such a circumstance either probable or possible?"

Mr. Ingram seeing how vain he would find it to contend with Charles, unless in a manner decidedly destructive to his present plans, affected to receive these words as an apology, though nothing could be less intended, or less calculated for such a purpose.

Mr. Savage, who had with difficulty forborne a laugh, perceiving Sidney's uneasiness by her rapid changes of colour, proposed to walk into an adjoining apartment; and Charles, on finding Mr. Ingram made no effort to follow them, sauntered round the rooms in search of amusement.

Freed from the restraint their presence had imposed, Sidney said with some confusion, "Much as I feel obliged, Mr. Savage, by your good nature, I must release you from any farther exertion of it: with Charles it is vain to contend, therefore I have ceased to oppose him; but, whatever my anxiety may have been to avoid Mr. Ingram, I feel excessively ashamed at such a disagreeable office being imposed on you, particularly as there is less probability of my in future being tormented by such disagreeable attentions."

Mr. Savage looked earnestly at Sidney, as if to discover what if those her genuine sentiments, and, reading in her expressive countenance, not only dislike to Mr. Ingram, but something bordering on disgust at the indelicacy of being thus forced on any man's attention, he replied with energy, "Do not accuse me of ill-timed gallantry if I frankly declare, that, so far from feeling any reluctance to assist Montague, it gives me real satisfaction; nor believe me so insensible as not gladly to avail myself of every opportunity, his friendship may afford, of cultivating the society of one whose acquaintance yields a gratification that I seldom experience."

There was something in the manner of this speech so unlike the respectful caution with which Mr. Savage had hitherto addressed her, that, surprised and chagrined, Sidney coldly replied, that much as she felt obliged, she must beg leave to decline an interference which she could not consider as proper, nor feel to be necessary.

Mr. Savage, colouring to crimson, haughtily begged her pardon, declaring that to oblige Montague had been the leading motive of his

interference; but since to her it was disagreeable, it should be instantly and for ever withdrawn.

Sorry at his being so much offended, Sidney would have made some effort to appease him, had she not imagined that in the whole of his conduct she could perceive that the attractions of her beauty, and the preference of her society, were counteracted by a fear of being drawn in to marry a mere fortune-hunting young lady: she thought it better therefore to appear ungrateful, than to suffer him to flatter his vanity with the supposition that Charles had intentionally, perhaps with her own concurrence, thrown her on his protection; a supposition which his high estimation of himself, and prompt fears on this subject, rendered not improbable.

During the whole course of the dance, Mr. Savage was distantly polite and haughtily attentive; and though he did not manifest any inclination to resign his attendance until he could place her under Charles's care, neither did he attempt to disguise how deeply he felt offended; Sidney, vexed and uneasy, on perceiving Charles speaking to Mrs. Monk, proposed their joining him.

Mrs. Monk, after addressing Sidney with the softest politeness, asked if she had seen her sister. Sidney replying in the negative, she proposed their going in search of her, to which she assented, though Charles and Mr. Savage again interchanged their expressive smiles.

In one of the adjoining rooms they found Miss Somerset conversing with Mr. and Mrs. Elverton; Mrs. Monk immediately asked her sister if she was fatigued by her last dance, or had engaged herself for another.

Miss Somerset, looking down, and apparently much confounded by such an inquiry, in the presence of two young men, replied that, the heat and crowd were so great, she should consider it rather more pleasant to sit down, if she were so fortunate as to procure a chair.

"There is but little chance of that, my love," said Mrs. Monk, "and I hope you will not have any objection to dance again, as I have been applied to by a young friend of mine, to try my interest with you for the next set; though, if it is disagreeable to you, I do not

wish you to comply: do not therefore, as you generally do, consult the inclination of your friends in preference to your own."

Mr. Savage, perfectly comprehending the meaning of this manœuvre, determined to shew Sidney, that one she seemed to consider of so little consequence was not quite so lightly regarded by others; and, addressing Miss Somerset, begged that, if she did not feel herself fatigued, she would postpone the honour Mrs. Monk intended for her friend, and favour him with her hand for that set.

With this request Miss Somerset complied with one of her sweetest smiles; Mrs. Monk remarking, that her dear Henrietta was so anxious to oblige her, she felt a peculiar pleasure on every occasion where she consulted her own inclination.

At this declaration Mr. Savage bowed, and Charles gravely remarked, that he wished he could find friends so well disposed to oblige him.

Mrs. Monk, in the course of conversation, asking Mr. Elverton how long it was since he had left his regiment, he replied three months.

Then, dreading lest the inquiry should give rise to Montague's raillery, and remembering how completely he had silenced him by the mention of Sedley on a former occasion, he asked Mrs. Monk when she had seen or heard of her old friend, Major Sedley.

"Not this very long time," replied she carelessly; "I do not believe I have seen him since before he went abroad."

"You will scarcely know him now," exclaimed Mr. Elverton, with a laugh: "I am told he is quite metamorphosed since I saw him, though, comparatively speaking, so short a period has elapsed."

"Indeed I think it very probable I should not know him," returned Mrs. Monk: "I remember very little of him, except that he was a pretty vain young man, who rated his own talents extravagantly high; and, as his self-conceit rendered him extremely disagreeable to Mr. Monk, I have no desire to renew our intimacy, more particularly as neither mamma, nor I ever liked him."

"Major Sedley, I believe," said Miss Somerset mildly, "was so young when you knew

him, Louisa, that a decided opinion could scarcely have been formed of his character; that is, he might have been only giddy and self-opinionated."

"Very probable, indeed," said Mrs. Monk, resuming her former sweetness of look and manner, which the mention of Sedley had changed to an expression of discontent· "but I recollect so imperfectly, and felt so little interested about him, that I rather give you the opinions of other people than my own. I was, you know," continued she, with affected simplicity, "just on the eve of marriage with Mr. Monk at the time."

The approach of Mr. Monk, whom Sidney had never before seen, put a period to a conversation which had exceedingly amused Mr. Elverton: and, with feelings of astonishment that she could hardly conceal, she was introduced to the man, for whom Sedley had been voluntarily slighted and resigned.

He was past the middle age, harsh and disagreeable in his countenance, forbidding in his manners and address, and altogether such a man as Sidney would have thought

so beautiful a young woman, as Mrs. Monk must have been at the time, would have turned from with disgust. Recollecting Sedley's having mentioned that she had always expressed as much dislike to Mr. Monk as her gentle nature seemed capable of feeling, she now watched her with attention, and thought she perceived, amidst all her studied smiles and apparent complacency, an expression of gloom and disgust steal over her fine features as she replied to his questions, which she could not forbear attributing to the comparisons she must at the moment have in her own mind drawn between them, however she had once suffered a love of wealth to warp her principles, and obscure what feelings she might have then possessed. Sidney carefully resolved never in her own person to experience such sensations, or to have reason to accuse herself of such a choice.

Mr. Ingram, advancing to Sidney, again asked her to dance, which she declined by pleading her prior engagement to Charles, with whom she immediately joined the dancers:

Mr. Ingram, now seriously offended, walking abruptly away.

During the remainder of the evening, Sidney, declining to dance any more, sat conversing with Charles, who was so much enraged at observing that Sir Townly Beauchamp had taken advantage of Mr. Montague's absence to pay Fanny the most public and marked attention, that he could think or speak on no other subject.

Being thus an unconcerned spectator during the principal part of the evening, Sidney, with infinite surprise, observed the fashionable manners that prevailed: young men lounging, loitering, almost sleeping in every vacant seat; some standing on the stairs, avoiding and even refusing to dance, because they thought it might be considered too great a compliment; sneering at the unmarried, and decidedly ridiculing all the *wall-flowers*, as they termed the disengaged young ladies present; expressing no interest or pleasure on any subject, except the prospect of a good supper; and, inattentive to sex, age, or

rank, rudely pushing forward to secure themselves the best places, perfectly careless whom they incommoded, or whom they neglected; and all this done from no satisfaction which it afforded, but simply to shew that they considered themselves as exempt from paying any attention, except to those who had, from peculiar rank or connexion claims it would not have been so fashionable, or perhaps so prudent to disregard.

CHAP. XIV.

DURING several succeeding days Mr. Ingram continued to visit at Merrion-square as usual, though without making any farther advances towards a more open declaration of his sentiments. Mr Savage, recovering from the gloom and haughtiness that at first pervaded his manners, again, as formerly, assisted Charles to turn him into ridicule, though without evincing that pleasure in Sidney's society, or that anxiety to oblige her, which had before so strikingly marked his conduct. Sidney, beginning to fear she had judged too hastily in believing he had any intention of presuming on the situation in which Charles's volatility had placed her, behaved to him with a gentle, though reserved, good breeding, that seemed at once to calm his displeasure, and to command his respect.

Nothing more material occurred during this period than a violent though private altercation between Charles and Fanny, respecting Sir Townly Beauchamp; and as Fanny, after the first ebullition of her anger had subsided, had either determined to yield to his advice, or had been terrified by his threat of speaking to Mr. Montague, or else dissembled her feelings so far as to act with caution where Sir Townly was concerned, no farther dispute occurred between them to engage his thoughts, or divert his attention from the plan he had regularly formed, and uniformly acted on, of laughing and tormenting Mr. Ingram into a retreat.

With terror and dismay, Sidney perceived that Mr. Montague appeared not only extremely anxious to promote her union with Mr. Ingram, but really offended with both her and his son; the one for eluding, the other for ridiculing, that gentleman. Mrs. Montague also seemed entirely, though silently, to participate in her husband's feelings; and, though their displeasure had no influence on Charles's conduct, she observed that he appeared uneasy

and disconcerted at meeting his father's glances of reproof.

Thus, in every way harassed, in every way oppressed, no amusements could even for a moment beguile her thoughts from the sad reflexions that occupied them. Threatened with the total loss of her fortune, which would not only sink her to indigence, but for ever separate her from one she so tenderly loved, and urged, under such complicated feelings of anguish, either to marry a man she extremely disliked, or deeply offend an uncle who had in every instance acted the part and supplied the loss of a father, the distress of mind she suffered became so obviously depicted on her countenance, that Mr. Savage's good nature overcoming the resentment of wounded pride, he more assiduously than ever sought to please and entertain her. His efforts however produced no other effect than to awaken gratitude for kindness which the distress of the moment rendered peculiarly acceptable. Convinced that Mr. Savage neither feared her uncle's displeasure, nor had the slightest wish of supplanting Mr. Ingram, and which

his full conviction of his own consequence and weight in society rendered it very improbable he should ever indulge, she, with frank though melancholy gratitude, accepted his assistance in shielding her from Ingram's hated and incessant persecution. Surprised at finding her undisguised dislike and displeasure at his addresses had no effect on his determination to prosecute his views, she resolved to end the struggle by applying to her uncle to give him his final dismission; dreading that he might plead his having been kept in suspense, though her conduct ought to have convinced him she had never for a moment hesitated on the answer she intended to give to his proposals; and the meanness and duplicity of thus endeavouring to arm himself with her uncle's authority and prejudices in his favour added all that was wanting to her dislike, increasing it almost to abhorrence.

To form this resolution, she found difficult, but to execute it was impracticable, as her uncle's increasing gloom and sternness wholly overset her courage; and, shrinking with terror from the idea of wilfully encountering and

augmenting his displeasure, she at length resolved to await his own time; and in no other way, than by her manner to Ingram, to shew her determination till called on to do so.

In this state Charles suffered matters to remain for some time; but, observing Sidney's dejection rapidly increasing, while her efforts to assume cheerfulness became every hour more painful, and his father, without making any effort to command her compliance, growing obviously more displeased with her and himself, he at length asked her if she had given her final answer to Mr. Montague; adding, that he had in vain waited for a good opportunity of speaking to him on the subject, but had been withheld by observing him so much out of temper, as well as by a wish of worrying Ingram into a retreat; though without appearing to take so decided a part, on finding his father more prepossessed in favour of the connexion than he could have supposed it possible.

To this inquiry Sidney replied by stating her wish to have done so, and the motives that had prevented her.

"You have less courage," cried he, after

some consideration, "than I thought you had; but, since it is so, I must only supply the deficiency. I will speak to my father, and give him your sentiments and my own on the subject."

"My dear, kind Charles," exclaimed Sidney, "how grateful do I feel for such an offer; but do not for my sake involve yourself in a dispute with my uncle, which I know would be extremely disagreeable to you; indeed, I think he appears very much displeased by your conduct to Mr. Ingram."

"I have made the same observation," replied he, "but it shall not hinder me from keeping my promise, nor shall it be of the slightest service to the crafty, politic, Ingram, with whom I would sooner openly quarrel than suffer you to become his wife. My blood rises against his mean-spirited artifices to induce my father to influence you to marry him; but with all his cleverness he will find me a match for him. Do not let this alarm you: he will not use any other weapons than cunning and dissimulation; nor will I any; except ridicule and counterplots; and, with respect to my father, enter-

tain no apprehensions of a quarrel between us. He will listen to me with calmness and attention, from knowing that I can have no interested motive in wishing to oppose him; and he will not, I am perfectly convinced, persist in promoting such a marriage, which, without exaggeration, I have reason to dislike, a thousand times more than the first day it was proposed. My father knows me well; he knows I have never yet wilfully offended or disobeyed him; and he will not therefore take any important step which he considers that I deliberately disapprove. My objections I will fully state though with all that respect to which he is entitled: trust therefore implicitly to me for saving you from an altercation with my father, which I know you would greatly regret; and, as we are to spend this evening at home, as soon as you all retire I will request his attention, that we may have ample leisure quietly to discuss the subject. I would do so immediately after dinner, only that Savage and Ingram dine here."

Convinced, by Charles's manner, that he would carefully avoid entering into any dis-

pute with his father, she depended on his interference for being saved from any altercation with her uncle, and freed from a persecution so galling to her pride, and in every way so odious. This in some degree relieved the misery she had lately suffered; and, though she fervently and gratefully thanked Charles, she no longer endeavoured to dissuade him from a line of conduct so truly beneficial to herself, and from which no ill consequences could result, for he appeared as anxious as she could desire, to avoid whatever could wear the appearance of giving offence to his father.

Thus reassured, and hoping that it was the last day she should be subject to Mr. Ingram's complacent and self-satisfied confidence in his powers of attraction, she descended to dinner in far better spirits than she had enjoyed since the day Mr. Montague had informed her of his proposals.

The behaviour of Charles during the whole of the evening, was exactly the reverse of what it had previously been to Mr. Ingram. He no longer, even indirectly, attempted either to turn him into ridicule, or to prevent his occupying

Sidney's attention; but he was coldly, and haughtily, repulsive to him; never addressing him unless absolutely compelled to do so; directing his conversation to Mr. Savage; and not seeming to consider him in any other light than as a gentleman on business with his father, to whom, if simply polite, it was all that could be required. Mr. Savage, on observing this change, modelled his manners accordingly; and, though well bred and attentive to the whole party in general, he displayed little of his usual animation or keen severity of remark; talking principally to Charles of their own immediate occupations and amusements.

This striking change in Charles produced a general sensation among the whole circle. Long accustomed to see him the promoter of mirth, the life and spring of every social party they formed, his unusual gravity and marked displeasure cast an universal damp on the spirits of all, and seemed peculiarly to affect Mr. and Mrs. Montague, who watched him with evident attention and obviously painful feelings. But Charles, without attend-

ing to their feelings, seemed to have no other object than to throw, to the haughty distance he desired, the consequential and self-approving Ingram; who, infinitely more pleased by his silence than by raillery he could so ill either endure or return, in no other way noticed the change than by a more studied and conscious display of deference and distinction to which he was entitled.

The disagreeable restraint, and internal uneasiness and anxiety, which Sidney experienced during this evening, rendered it one of the most irksome she had ever passed; and, had not the hope of never again encountering such a scene supported her spirits, the effort of assumed composure would have been an exertion wholly beyond her resolution.

Some time after Mr. Savage and Mr. Ingram had taken their leave, Mrs. Montague rose to retire; when Charles abruptly asked his father if he had any objection to sit up for a short time longer, as he wished to have some serious conversation with him.

On hearing this request Mr. Montague changed colour; and Mrs. Montague, with an

expression of mingled curiosity and disapprobation, cast her eyes on her son, but uttered not a word. Mr. Montague, after a moment of hesitating and embarrassed silence, gave a cold assent. Charles, with some emotion and evident anxiety, thanked him for his compliance; while Sidney, terrified at observing the looks and manner of both her aunt and uncle, hurried quickly out of the room, and hastened up stairs, followed by Anna, who eagerly demanded if she could guess on what subject Charles intended to speak to her papa, as he seemed but little inclined to listen to him, and as her mamma appeared to be apprehensive of a quarrel between them.

"He intends to speak to my uncle about Mr. Ingram," replied Sidney; "but surely you do not apprehend that they will have any quarrel on such a subject. If I thought there was even a probability of that, I would return to the room and speak myself to my uncle; but Charles solemnly assured me he would carefully avoid any thing displeasing to my uncle."

"Do not make yourself needlessly uneasy, my dear Sidney," said Anna, affectionately:

" if Charles wished to marry any person papa disapproved, I would not then answer for their not quarrelling, and being both very violent; but, on the present occasion, I cannot see the slightest chance of such an occurrence; though my mamma is so apprehensive about Charles, that every trifle agitates her. But, is he not the dearest, best-hearted, fellow in the world,—ever ready to befriend every human being who requires his assistance? I cannot wonder papa and mamma love him as they do; though they might feel a little more affection for me, and not bestow all they can spare from him on that odious Fanny, who has taken the utmost pains to prevail on mamma to urge papa to insist on your marrying the detestable Ingram. I am no heroine, and like wealth and splendour as well as other people, and yet I would almost rather die than marry him; the vilest, most consequential, fellow I ever yet beheld! I wonder what poor Sedley would say if he heard you were asked to marry such a wretch? I suppose he would think papa and mamma just such people as the Somersets."

"We will not speak of Sedley, my dear Anna," said Sidney, weeping; "he and I are separated for life; and I ought, if possible, to forget him."

"That is but too true," cried Anna, "unless his tyrannical, insolent, old father was to take his departure from this world;—if that once happened, you might then be married, for, indeed, he loved you for yourself. I had a letter to-day from Sophy Radcliffe; and she mentions in confidence, that Sedley dined at her father's last week for the first time since we left the country; and that she really felt for him on observing how evidently he struggled to assume something of his former manners. She says he looks wretchedly ill; and, though Captain Elmore takes the utmost pains to assist him, and to shield him from observation, he cannot succeed, for every person remarks the alteration; and the cause is so well known from French, that your name is never mentioned in his presence except by Mr, Dawson, who spoke of you that day designedly to torment him. On hearing your namc, though without any reference to

himself, which I dare say Dawson was afraid to venture, though his eyes, she said, flashed fire, he grew so pale that every person pitied him. I suppose he was at once shocked and enraged from perceiving that Dawson did it on purpose."

Then seeing that Sidney, who had covered her face with her handkerchief, was weeping bitterly, she checked herself, and said, "I don't know how I came to tell you all this, but I forgot myself in my indignation against that odious Ingram: but do, dear Sidney, recover your spirits; you will soon be rid of him: and, even should the Hamiltons rob you of your fortune, and that you never should be married to Sedley, still there is no fear of your not being more happily settled than being doomed for life to study the humour of a jealous, tyrannical, old knave, who thinks, because he can deck you in diamonds, you should be his humble and submissive slave."

This was an effort which Sidney could not at the moment promise to make; and Anna, sorry for the effects of her thoughtlessness, tenderly wished her good night; knowing

that, by leaving her to herself, she would best enable her to make an effort to recover from the distressing agitation which she had undesignedly occasioned.

On being left alone, Sidney took out Sedley's picture, and felt relieved from the oppressive weight of anguish she endured by gazing on it, and bathing it with her uncontrolled tears, with all the fervour of newly-awakened grief; solemnly resolving that no persecution, nor threatened indigence, should ever induce her to add one more to the pangs she had already given him, by voluntarily forfeiting the confidence he reposed in her constancy and affection; but through life to preserve her right to share his sufferings, however she might be denied the power of mitigating them; and never, while he remained single, to allow any temptation, or any distress, to induce her to think of forming another connexion.

Soothed by this determination, and by the relief she had given to feelings so long and so painfully restrained, Sidney at length became calm; when her thoughts insensibly recurring to Charles, she began to wonder that she had

not yet heard either him or Mr. Montague ascending the stairs to their apartments; though, on looking at her watch, she saw it was long past three o'clock. Again roused to the anticipation of the most disastrous consequences, she became seriously unhappy lest their conference had not proceeded so amicably as she had been led to hope, and that, mutually irritated, they had continued to debate, heedless of the hour.

Terrified by this apprehension, and determined to ascertain if she had suffered them to pass unobserved to their rooms, she softly unclosed the door, and walked to the head of the stairs, to be certain whether they had yet retired; when she was startled by hearing Mr. Montague, in a loud and angry tone, reply to something Charles had been saying, whose voice was too low to reach her ear.

Alarmed at what appeared this full confirmation of her worst fears, she hastily returned to her apartment; but, unable to retire to rest, she slowly paced the room, in anxious expectation of the moment they should come up stairs, that she might be

enabled to judge, from their manner of parting, to what height their dispute had arisen; as that they had disputed she could now no longer doubt, though unable to distinguish a syllable of what Mr. Montague had said.

Thus heavily and miserably passed the hours till about five o'clock, when she heard Charles ascend the stairs, and hurry to his room with a rapidity, that, with him, always indicated the eagerness of pleasure, or the violence of passion; and to the latter cause alone could she now attribute his haste.

Her first impulse was to hurry down to her uncle, and endeavour to diminish his displeasure towards Charles, by avowing that affection for her had alone prompted an interference that was so offensive; but the terror of encountering him while under the full influence of the additional wrath he must feel at being thus forced into a contest with so beloved a son, whom he disliked to oppose or contradict even in trifles, withheld her; and, in the moment she took for deliberation, she heard Mr. Montague walk up stairs, and retire to his apartment.

How Charles could thus have forfeited all the promises he had made, why he should thus needlessly irritate his father, and not only augment her original cause of unhappiness, but give her a fresh subject of uneasiness, she could not conjecture. Wearied and oppressed with a sensation of misery, nearly amounting to despair, she threw herself on the bed, resolved to seize the first opportunity of accosting Charles, and learning what had passed.

CHAP. XV.

The next morning Sidney descended, at the usual breakfast-hour, with a countenance from which the bloom of health and beauty, the glow of youth and animation, were wholly fled—her eyes not only robbed of all their native lustre, but so languid and heavy as almost to bespeak indisposition.

In the breakfast-room she did not find any of the family yet assembled except Miss Watkins and Anna, who being restrained, by her aunt's presence from either making inquiries or offering consolation, she sat silent, till Kennedy entered the room with a message from his master, requesting to see her in the library.

This summons Sidney gladly obeyed. On entering the room, she found Charles sitting in a very thoughtful posture at the fire; when, eagerly advancing, she exclaimed, " Why,

my dear Charles, did you break the promise you made me of avoiding any dispute with my uncle? or what could have kept you up so late last night? Do, I entreat, tell me all that has occurred; and let me, if possible, endeavour to rectify the mischief your too generous kindness to me has created."

"How do you know I sat up so late?" cried he; "have you seen my father? and has he told you what passed?"

To this inquiry Sidney replied by stating all that had awakened her fears, concluding by again urging him to tell her candidly what had passed.

"To tell you all that passed," cried Charles, while a momentary cloud passed over his countenance, "I have neither time nor power. I will, however, give you the substance, as far at least as you are concerned; and I will also add my advice, which I charge you, as you value your own happiness, implicitly to follow."

This Sidney promised, if consistent with the duty and respect they both owed her uncle. Charles, without replying to her observation,

proceeded: "That deceitful, scheming Ingram, has so completely impressed my father with the opinion that it is my interference alone, and that it is entirely to please me, that you persist in refusing him, that every effort I made to undeceive him, or prove the impropriety, the connexion, merely served to incense him. Though I struggled more than I ever did in my life to command my temper, my father spoke in such a tone of authority, and so haughtily declared his resolution of exerting it, to enforce the obedience he demanded to his wishes, that I could no longer contain myself; and, after some very foolish and unnecessary altercation, finding myself grow warmer than I thought consistent with either prudence or duty, I fairly made my escape, not choosing, however irritated by reproaches that I so little deserved, to violate the respect I owe him. As cooler reflection has convinced me that I should not only injure you, but make a very bad return to my father's constant kindness, by any farther interference, I have determined to shew that attention to his wishes, which, if I did not of my own accord feel inclined to pay,

menaces he never before thought proper to use would little avail towards enforcing. On yourself alone, therefore, must you, I am sorry to be compelled to say, depend for defeating that wily and treacherous Ingram, whom, were it not from a dislike to quarrel with my father, I would publicly tax with his low, dishonourable artifice. Do not, however, despair; and exert your courage to follow my advice, which is simply this:—When my father calls upon you for your answer, as he avowed his intention of this day doing, tell him calmly your fixed resolution of never yielding your consent; and, let him storm as he pleases, say nothing more, nor follow my example of foolishly incensing him. You need not, I forewarn you, expect that mean-spirited fellow will take this as a final dismission;—he will still hover, and flutter, and hope, by complaisance and flattery, to obtain the power of revenging the wound you have given to his vanity. But, surely, I need scarcely warn you against being deceived into a marriage which would make you a wretch for life, and after which I never could again consider you as a friend or relation; for, as

Ingram's wife, he never would suffer you to live on terms of friendship with me. He has, with all his cunning, very foolishly betrayed himself."

Sidney, unable to reply, remained silent; and Charles, after a short pause, continued "Your best way, therefore, is to treat him with the most marked disdain; and never suffer him to address you without giving him to understand that you equally despise and dislike his conduct, and that it shall never avail him. When my father is convinced of Ingram's meanness, and that I have not exerted any influence to prejudice you against him, he will quickly become sensible of the impropriety of suffering him to dangle after you, and will give him his final dismission. The anxiety my father feels to see you eligibly settled is the true motive of conduct that appears tyrannical and unjust. He dreads the thoughts of leaving you to contend single-handed with the Hamiltons, and, in fact, fears the property is already gone; but, I again repeat, let no such fears influence you; while I live you shall never want a home, a protection, and

a fond affectionate welcome, to my house; and, whether living or dead, justice will finally triumph, and the Hamiltons must perjure themselves in all their branches before to me, or to any human being, you can find it necessary to be indebted. I have now nothing more to add, except to warn you against indulging in melancholy which has already made too great a change in your appearance. Be as gentle as your own heart can incline you, but act with resolution; and vigorously determine to mingle in every party and every amusement that offers. It will not only keep up your spirits; but it will, beyond every thing else, sicken Ingram of his pursuit. If you stay at home, you will be eternally exposed to his disgusting conversation; by going out you distance him at once, as not only Savage, but every other man who has sufficient taste to prefer your society to the languishing misses, or the would-be *belle-esprits*, will then more effectually assist you than I have been able to do."

Wearied by the vehemence with which he had been speaking, Charles stopped; and Sidney, stunned, bewildered, and affrighted,

could neither reply, reflect, nor determine what part she ought to act when Kennedy, tapping at the door, told them that Mr. and Mrs. Montague were in the breakfast-room.

On receiving this message Charles changed colour; and, after again urging Sidney to spirit and exertion, and to follow his advice, drew her hand within his arm, and led her to the breakfast-room, at the door of which he stopped, and told her to go in first.

Sidney mechanically did as desired, and, after exerting herself to address the whole party, she sat down to the table; but every person replyed in a manner so laconic, that she must have been convinced that their thoughts were nearly as much occupied as her own.

Scarcely had she been seated when Charles entered, to whom Mr. Montague directed a look of such anger and reproach, that Charles, colouring to crimson, hesitated for a moment, as if debating whether he should not immediately leave the room; but, making a powerful struggle to conquer his feelings he advanced, and, with deliberate coolness, severally and dis-

tinctly addressed the party as usual. His voice however faltered and he betrayed some emotion, as he wished his father good morning, who replied with a sternness that not only startled and shocked Sidney, but overset all Charles's command of himself. Hastily pushing back his chair, he was again on the eve of yielding to passion, and making an instant retreat, when he was recalled to recollection by the terrified and deathlike countenance of Sidney, which seemed to act like a stroke of electricity on his nerves, and instantly restored him to his former self-command. Though his usual gaiety had wholly forsaken him, and though he appeared to have a mingled fear and dislike of addressing his father, he talked during the whole time of breakfast to his mother, Miss Watkins, and Fanny, who, for what reason Sidney was not calm enough even to conjecture, seemed extremely desirous to appear inattentive observers of the passing scene. Mr. Montague, taking up a newspaper, read without paying any farther attention to Sidney or his son.

Before breakfast was quite concluded Charles

asked his mother if she would take a drive with him in his curricle, as it was a fine clear day, to which she assented; and, though Mr. Montague looked alternately at each, on hearing the proposal made and accepted, he never uttered a remark.

Sidney, retiring to her room, was speedily followed by Anna, in order to inquire if Charles had told her on what subject he and her papa had quarrelled, for that they had done so was too evident, though Charles had struggled so hard to disguise it, and to behave as if nothing unusual had happened.

Sidney was for some time unable to reply to her questions; but at length, calming her agitation, she related all Charles had told her.

"This is all a scheme of Fanny's and my aunt Watkins's," cried Anna; "for, the moment Fanny came into the room, my aunt told her that Charles had sent to desire a private conference with you, and the same information they both gave to papa and mamma when they came down to breakfast; and when papa heard it he swore violently, which you know is not very usual with him, that Charles should

repent his duplicity, and feel the weight of the authority he so wantonly despised. Mamma was terrified, and tried to sooth papa, and to convince him that Charles never would act in defiance of his wishes; but papa told her to forbear the subject, and take care how she attempted to support Charles in disobedience, as he was determined to insist on his compliance with his will, or else severely punish him if he refused it. I wondered excessively what it could be all about, and was quite surprised how Charles could think of so coolly speaking to papa on his entrance; but I suppose papa has not been so violent in his threats to him as he was to mamma; nor can I at all understand how his disliking to have you marry that odious Ingram can so violently offend papa."

"I cannot indeed think," cried Sidney, sighing deeply, "nor express my sorrow that regard to me has exposed my poor Charles to such unmerited displeasure. Surely" added she, thoughtfully, "something else must have irritated my uncle;—he cannot be so wilfully unjust."

"I think there must," exclaimed Anna. "However contrary my papa's opinion might be to Charles's, I never before heard him express any thing like violent displeasure towards him; and it is the first time I ever recollect hearing papa throw out a menace against him. It is vain, then, to think that his merely objecting to your marrying Ingram has so strangely incensed papa, and Charles must have deceived you in telling you so."

"What can it be," cried Sidney, "that has so violently irritated my uncle? Had it been any thing distinct from me and my affairs, Charles is too generous to have allowed me to feel the misery of believing that I alone had produced dissension between him and his father. Surely, surely," continued she, almost overpowered by the suspicion that darted like lightning across her imagination, "Fanny cannot have persuaded my uncle that Charles has any sinister views in endeavouring to persuade him to acquiesce in my refusal of Mr. Ingram."

"The same suspicion, I will candidly confess, had occurred to me," cried Anna, "till I re-

collected the folly of such an idea, after your so recently proving to my papa that your heart was engaged to another. But I will venture another supposition; perhaps you may laugh at my folly, but it is the only way I can rationally account for papa's violent rage, I should fancy that Fanny and Miss Watkins, between them, have put it into papa's head that you have influenced Charles to act the part he has done, in order to preserve your faith to Sedley, and perhaps persuaded him that you have engaged him to assist you in carrying on a clandestine correspondence: now, you, who know my papa's pride, must be sensible how much such an idea would enrage him, and how tenfold angry he would be with Charles for such conduct, after what passed at BelleVue; and as against him all his indignation was expressed, all his threats uttered, and that he decidedly accused him of duplicity, I must own I cannot get it out of my head that such has been their plan. Even Charles' own conduct looks like it; his expressing such anger at papa's accusation, yet afterwards coming in to breakfast

and endeavouring to behave as if nothing had happened, looks so like the part he would act under such circumstances, disdaining to appear as if he thought any person could really suspect him; then, his advice to you not to stay at home, but to appear constantly in public, looks as if he dreaded papa might think you had some plan in doing so;—altogether it strikes me that I have exactly hit on the fact."

Such an idea had never occurred to Sidney, who had rather suspected Fanny's accusation of her endeavouring, or of her having succeeded in obtaining Charles's affections, so that selfish motives alone had influenced his late conduct; but Anna's supposition seemed to be more natural: yet she wondered excessively how her uncle could suspect her, but more particularly his own son, of acting so meanly and dishonourably; and she asked Anna if she would advise her to speak to him on the subject.

"No," cried she, "by no means: papa will take it as a certain proof of guilt; and, while he is so angry, and Charles also in such an irritable state of mind, I should tremble at the

idea of their having any farther altercation; and, if papa disbelieves Charles, you cannot be offended at my saying he would not credit your assertions."

"What am I to do then?" exclaimed Sidney, weeping; "am I to suffer my dear generous Charles to be so injudiciously suspected, without making an effort to undeceive my uncle?"

"The best and only advice I can give you," said Anna, "is simply to follow Charles's directions. Had he any wish that you should know my papa's suspicions, he would have told you at once: you need not therefore apply to him for information which I am sure he will not give; after you left the room, I took an opportunity of inquiring what had passed; but he angrily said he could not tell me, and charged me to desire you to be punctual in following his injunctions, and also to assist you myself as far as I could; and this I most assuredly will, not only from affection to you, but also to gratify my dear Charles in almost the only instance he has required my

aid, though on every occasion he has been my best and kindest friend."

With tears of gratitude and sorrow, Sidney assured Anna she would be wholly guided by Charles's advice, and thanked her for her own kindness and attention.

"One good turn deserves another, my dear Sidney," said Anna, smiling; "you know, when I shall hereafter require your assistance, I shall expect to meet with it; I never have been so happy as since you came to live with us, for till that time, let me act as I would, mamma frequently persuaded Charles that I was giddy, and that I would behave improperly if permitted, because I could not bear the stupid life I led in the school-room; but, as he has been always perfectly satisfied when I was with you, he has paid no attention since to Fanny's or my aunt's stories, or even to those they persuaded mamma to tell him. Charles has never directly told me all this, but he has given me to understand it; and I will candidly acknowledge, that, though I would not deliberately act with impropriety, yet, your presence of

mind or prudence I never could be expected to have, for I have been left wholly to any governess that came in the way, and taught contrary principles and contrary rules by them all; while your education was the first object of my uncle's thoughts and care, and he, I have always heard papa say, was a most accomplished and sensible man. But come," continued she, seeing Sidney weep with increased bitterness at this inadvertent mention of her father, "I wished to drive Ingram and his coterie out of your head, by chattering of myself, and not to add to your uneasiness by useless regret. Do now, like a good creature, try to recover your spirits, and come with me to the drawing-room, and let us have recourse to music, to drown thought: if Orpheus charmed the god of Hell and the Furies by his melody, we may hope to drive away their representatives by similar means."

Weakly to nourish unavailing sorrow, Sidney considered as inconsistent with her duty; and the least return she thought due, both to Charles and Anna, was to endeavour to reward their kindness by trying to profit by their ad-

vice; and, drying her tears, she accompanied Anna to the drawing-room, where they found only Miss Watkins.

Here they continued to practise pieces of music which Mrs. Montague wished they should play at a party for which she had sent out cards, till a servant came in with a request from Mr. Montague to see Sidney immediately.

Sidney, turning pale at this message, was rising to obey, when Anna, detaining her, said, in a low voice, "Now conjure up the spirit of poor Sedley to your aid, and think what his feelings would be on seeing you the wife of that detestable Ingram, and it will give you courage to reject him with the disdain he deserves, and support you against all papa's anger; and he, Charles, and myself, will yet laugh at your frights and fears."

"I require something indeed to support my spirits," replied Sidney; "but how false must be the courage I could assume from a hope which never may be realized!"

"Nonsense!" cried Anna; "if you have not courage, you never will make a good soldier's wife, and such I predict you will be; so, now

run off, and act a part worthy the chosen love of such a hero."

Sidney involuntarily smiled at Anna's mode of inspiring her with courage; nor was it an injudicious or an unsuccessful one, as the contrast of the two men thus suddenly represented to her imagination,—the thought of how Sedley would, if he was present, advise her to act,—the spirit she owed to one, who so deeply lamented her, as to render him an object of observation to all, and even of ridicule to some, roused up her fortitude, and determined her to act in such a manner as would justify the tenderness he had manifested, and the confidence he reposed in her affection, when, though separated, and perhaps for ever, he made no effort to tear her from his heart, and to enjoy those amusements in which, when she knew him, he had taken great, though tempered, pleasure.

These reflections, thus opportunely awakened, enabled her to enter her uncle's library with composure, and even to meet, without shrinking, the stern glance with which he received her.

Scarcely was she seated when Mr. Montague, in a voice of cold displeasure, desired to be informed of the result of her deliberations respecting Mr. Ingram's proposals, which he hoped she had considered with the attention he had recommended to her.

"I have, sir," replied Sidney, steadily, "and must repeat my former declaration, that Mr. Ingram I never will marry."

"That is," said Mr. Montague, sternly, "you are determined to sacrifice the peace of your future life to the indulgence of romantic folly."

Sidney coloured at a charge which implied that affection for Sedley was the obstacle that prevented her compliance, and which fully corroborated all Anna's suspicions. Unwilling to provoke her uncle by avowing that he was right in suspecting it influenced, though it did not wholly guide, her refusal to accede to his wishes, she mildly replied, "Surely, sir, you cannot call my refusal to marry a man to whom I feel a very strong dislike, romantic folly? Would such a means of securing afflu-

ence be consistant with religion or with propriety?"

"Such arguments," cried Mr. Montague, "are always adduced by every girl who chooses to follow her own inclination, in opposition to the wishes and advice of her friends; nor can you for a moment deceive me by professions, which, did not other feelings influence you, would never be even thought of."

"I have made no attempt to deceive you, sir," said Sidney with firmness; "nor was there any necessity for urging all my feelings, when, such is the dislike I feel to Mr. Ingram, there is scarcely any distress I would not encounter rather than become his wife."

"You are absolutely determined to reject him, then?" exclaimed Mr. Montague, reddening with anger.

"I am, sir," replied Sidney, steadily, though shocked by her uncle's change of countenance, "and nothing can alter my resolution."

"I shall never again make the effort," cried Mr. Montague, with a voice and countenance in which anger seemed struggling with violent, though repressed, emotion; "but listen

to me, Sidney Montague and hear my determination, which you will find as unalterable as you have declared your's:—never from this moment will I again interfere in your concerns, or offer you my advice: as soon as you are of age, I will resign your affairs into your own hands, and leave you as unfettered mistress of your inclinations and conduct as the law and your own wishes can enforce: as a daughter I have ever wished to consider and treat you, and you may, perhaps, one day repent the return you have made to my care and tenderness. I mean this as no reproach," continued he haughtily, on seeing her burst into tears at this cruel speech; "I have in no instance acted beyond what I considered the debt I owed to my brother's memory; but I must and will consider myself as exonerated from in future directing or even interfering with the conduct of a niece who refuses to shew either duty to a guardian, or confidence to an uncle."

"Since such is your determination, sir," said Sidney, whose pride rose in proportion to the reproachful tone he had assumed, and concluding that he meant not only to taunt her

with his kindness, but to hint that he no longer wished her to reside under his protection, "will you allow me to live with Mrs. Orpin? After such a declaration, in this house I can no longer feel myself either a happy or a welcome guest."

"Such a proposal," said Mr. Montague, in great agitation, "I little expected that a daughter of my brother Charles would ever have made to me. When you are your own mistress, act as you please; but, till then, I consider myself entitled, as your guardian, to declare that under my protection, and in my house, you shall reside. I did not," continued he, suddenly rising, "mean to say that I either intended to lay aside my authority, or to give up my care of your property, till that time arrived; but advice so decidedly rejected I shall not again repeat."

Sidney, perceiving that passion had betrayed Mr. Montague into language that conveyed a meaning he had not intended, and sorry at seeing him so much agitated, said, mildly, "I am sorry, uncle, for having offended you, and for appearing to make an ungrateful return

for kindness which I most sensibly feel; but I cannot, indeed I cannot, in *this* instance obey you."

"I am sorry, for your own sake, you cannot," replied Mr. Montague, coldly; "for myself, I have nothing more to say."

Then, with sullen dignity he left the room without uttering another word.

By no circumstance of Sidney's life had she been so cruelly affected as by this short conversation with her uncle. His declaration that he no longer considered her worthy of his care or tenderness, his threat that both should be withdrawn, his reproach of ingratitude, and his determined resolution not to accept the apology which a fear of having mistaken his meaning had induced her to offer.

"And am I, indeed," cried she, while emotion almost suffocated her, "am I sunk so low as to be told I am no longer worthy the care or protection of my uncle,—that I am an unwel come inmate in his house, and yet refused permission to leave it,—threatened with being left entirely to the mercy of the Hamiltons, and yet reproached with my own incapacity;—and

all this by the uncle I so fondly considered in the light of a parent? How could I be so foolish as to consider as such any but my own beloved father? He would not have treated me so harshly; he would not have insisted on such submission, or so cruelly upbraided me for refusing the obedience I would have refused even to him. In every instance I have yielded to my uncle the same obedience I would have paid to him, and yet how unlike a child has he treated me to-day! What am I to do? Where am I to look for advice or consolation, when even poor Charles is in such disgrace for wishing to assist and console me?"

Thus dejected and irritated, no tears would come to her relief to calm her indignant feelings. In this state she continued when Anna, learning that her father had left the house, came to inquire into the particulars of what had occurred; and, in broken sentences, she related the conversation that had just passed.

"And what, in the name of wonder, can have so violently affected you, my dear Sidney?" exclaimed Anna. "Must not Ingram now take his final dismission, and rid you of

his odious addresses? And, as to any thing papa said in a passion, do not let it make too deep an impression. When he could accuse Charles of duplicity, and even violently threaten his favourite child, how can you expect to escape? And what folly to suppose he meant any charge of ingratitude, when he would, under similar circumstances, have spoken to me in the same manner? Be assured that nothing will so mortally offend him as your entertaining any resentment for an insinuation he did not intend to convey. For mercy sake do not put such an idea into Charles's head as that you consider yourself an unwelcome guest in this house!"

"Ah, my dear Anna," cried Sidney, "Charles is his son, you are his daughter, and therefore could not have such bitter feelings as I must endure, the dependant on his bounty; owing to him not only my rank in society, but even trusting to his exertions for every chance of the recovery of my fortune. Under such circumstances, the charge of ingratitude must sting me to the soul."

"If you are determined to make yourself

unhappy," cried Anna, "what can I say or urge? My papa is your guardian; you are his ward and niece, residing in his house, as a matter of course, and with your own money he tries to recover your property. This is simply the state of the case."

"No, no," cried Sidney, "that is not the simple statement. I live in his house on the same terms that you do. I am by him and his family brought into the world, and by his interest and influence has he engaged lawyers and agents to undertake the recovery of a property, of which, if lost, he must bear all these expenses, as never can I then make any return for their exertions."

"Well, well," exclaimed Anna, laughing, "all I can say is, you have only more clearly than I did, proved my assertions, that my papa considers you in every instance as his child; and that, therefore, he has a right to scold and threaten you when you are naughty, as he has done his dearly beloved Charles; so, pray follow that good boy's example: though you may be resolved not to sacrifice your happiness to please papa, shew him you have no desire

needlessly to offend him, but, like Charles, are content to bear a little harshness in return for all his kindness. Now I have replied as ably and as lawyer-like as Counsellor Ingram himself could have done, and settled the matter as satisfactorily as the best Judge in the land; so pray let the suit rest, and come with me, and let us finish our practising, that we may not have mamma also in the pouts about want of duty, and other pretty little subjects of maternal complaint."

Anna's good nature relieved, while her arguments soothed, but they could not extract the sting which wounded pride had inflicted on Sidney's sensitive mind, so keenly alive to aught that could wear even the aspect of just reproach. Yet, though she could not so far recover herself as to comply with Anna's desire of assisting her in her music, she strove to tranquillize her feelings, and to behave with propriety to her uncle at their next meeting. By his express and angry declaration, his house she should not leave till she was of age,—of that period she still wanted some months—and whatever were her sentiments, resentment she

was resolutely on her guard against betraying, as that would have appeared equally unseemly and ungrateful.

They received no interruption till Mrs. Montague's return from her drive with Charles, who did not accompany her up stairs. A few moments after her entrance she gently, and more affectionately than she had for weeks, addressed Sidney—proposing to accompany her up stairs, as she wished for some private conversation.

The moment they were seated Mrs. Montague began :—"Charles and I have had much conversation respecting you, Sidney ; and he has been expressing his sorrow at his father's suspecting him of wishing to influence you against Mr. Ingram, which he declares he has in no other way done than by advising you never to sacrifice your happiness to interested motives ; and as Mr. Montague has prohibited him, under pain of his severe displeasure, again to mention the subject, he has requested that I would endeavour to convince his father of how little wish he had to offend him by his interference ; and also to plead your cause, and

try to induce your uncle to forbear insisting on a compliance which is so extremely disagreeable to you. All this I have promised, and all this I intend to do, though very unwilling to interfere with your uncle on any subject where our opinions in the slightest degree differ. Success I cannot promise you, and scarcely even hope; as, if Mr. Montague expresses any dislike to hear the subject discussed, I must desist; but the attempt I feel due to my dear Charles's entreaties, and to his tender consideration for my happiness on every occasion; and also in gratitude to the tender care that you took of my beloved child and myself when we required your assistance. I must also request a similar compliance from you to another request of Charles's, which is, that you will accompany the girls to parties as usual, as your staying at home might not be viewed by your uncle in the same light as Charles or I might consider it."

This fresh proof of Charles' tender and attentive kindness again overpowered Sidney, and it was long before she could so far recover herself as to express her gratitude to him and

to Mrs. Montague, or promise to be guided by their wishes and advice.

"I am sorry," said Mrs. Montague, affected by her distress, "to perceive that your feelings are so deeply wounded; but endeavour, my dear Sidney, to recover your spirits, and trust to Charles' good-nature, who, you will not accuse me of a mother's weakness if I say, is one of the best, the most deserving young men in existence, and worthy of every indulgence and tenderness his parents can shew him."

"Oh! surely he is," cried Sidney, with energy; "and never can I express my gratitude, and affection for him, or the sorrow I feel at having, even for a moment, exposed him to his father's unmerited displeasure. Has he told you, ma'am, why my uncle has been so undeservedly harsh to him?"

"He has told me all his thoughts and feelings, and in the most solemn manner pledged his honour that he never intended to disobey or offend his father; whether he will or will not believe him, I most assuredly do; and shall, in every possible instance, without

offending Mr. Montague, study his wishes, and comply with his requests. The confidence he has imparted I have, however, promised not to betray; and, when I say that, you will not even wish to learn what passed."

"Certainly not, ma'am; too much gratitude do I owe to Charles not to rest satisfied with his prudence; but suffer me also, aunt, in turn, to assure you most solemnly, that, in any other instance than refusing to marry Mr. Ingram, I have never intended any disobedience to my uncle; and that, since I have resided in his house, it has been my constant wish to please both you and him; for, believe me, I am not ungrateful for the kindness which you have shewn me."

A slight blush tinged Mrs. Montague's cheeks at this speech; but she quickly replied, "I am in every respect perfectly satisfied with the conduct of both; and if I ever have in any instance appeared insensible to the assiduous attention which you have shewed me, believe me, dear Sidney, I have been betrayed into it by circumstances which shall not again mislead me. Let this assurance

satisfy you, and now, in compliance with my wishes, wave the subject."

Delighted by Mrs. Montague's gentleness, and most seasonable offer of assistance, Sidney acquired sufficient courage to relate what had passed between her and her uncle, and not without tears confessed how deeply he had wounded her feelings by his declared intention of declining any farther interference in her affairs, and still more by his accusation of ingratitude.

"Your uncle," said Mrs. Montague, "like many warm-hearted persons, is extremely violent when opposed, and does not, in the first moment of passion, consider whether he is in justice entitled to the submission he demands; but do not so unjustly accuse him as to suspect his wish of marrying you to Mr. Ingram arose from any desire to rid himself of the trouble of superintending your affairs, or that he meant the reproach of ingratitude in the light your feelings has induced you to view it. If to my sister, though in some respects, I confess, deservedly disagreeable to him, he has behaved with uniform and kind attention, how much more must his feelings be interested for

you, the only child of a brother who always possessed his warmest affection! To advise you on the subject of marrying Mr. Ingram would be superfluous, after your own positive declaration; nor, indeed after the utter abhorrence my dear Charles has expressed to the connexion, could I now wish it to take place, however anxious to see you well and happily settled in life. If I can bring your uncle over to my sentiments, I will; if I cannot, you must only bear his present displeasure with gentleness. It will not last long, and trust me, that, whatever he may in a moment of passion say, he would no more suffer you to quit his house, no more withdraw his care and protection from you, than he would from either of his own daughters: and do not allow pride, or unnecessary resentment, to wound him, and injure your own peace. This world is too full of suffering, wilfully to add to sorrow; and, though you have met with some severe trials, I hope and trust you will yet be happily and eligibly established in life."

Conscious as Sidney was that to Charles alone Mrs. Montague's present kindness was to

be ascribed, it yet inspired her with gratitude, and poured a balm into her wounded mind which Anna's good nature had failed to effect. Mrs. Montague, pleased and even affected by the warmth of her expressions, affectionately embraced her, and, adding that she would expect her to accompany her that evening to Mrs. Talbot's, desired she would prepare to meet her uncle in such a manner as should not give him any additional cause of displeasure, and which would so equally gratify herself and her beloved Charles. Sidney, promising to be in every instance guided by her instructions, quitted her apartment, and retired to her own.

On her return to the drawing-room, she found all the family assembled except Charles; but, as Mr. Montague did not seem to notice her entrance, and looked, though not so stern, yet more gloomy than he had done in the morning, she did not venture to address him, nor did he as usual converse with his family, but sat in total silence.

A short time before dinner Charles made his appearance, and Sidney was pleased at ob-

serving that his countenance wore no trace of the anger which had marked it in the morning; though, on perceiving that his father neither spoke to him, norappeare dto remark he was in the room, he looked restless and dissatisfied. He did not however make any effort to interrupt him; but, taking a seat beside his mother, conversed with her. On seeing him thus engaged, Mr. Montague gave him a look of renewed displeasure, and then relapsed into his former meditations.

During dinner Charles made several indirect efforts to induce his father to converse with him as usual; and, though evidently hurt at the cold repulse Mr. Montague gave to his attempts, he continued them with a perseverance that surprised Sidney, from being so well acquainted with his irritable feelings. At length, growing more offended than he chose either to avow or betray, he rose from his seat very soon after the cloth was removed; and, telling his mother not to expect him to join her party, as he was particularly engaged, quitted the room.

While Sidney was employed at her toilette,

Mrs. Montague came into her room, and, dismissing her woman, who was assisting Sidney, said, " I have come, my dear Sidney, to mention what has passed between Mr. Montague and myself, as I know you must feel very anxious on the subject; the exact particulars it would neither be pleasant for you to hear, nor for me to relate, as, though some things must please, others must give you pain.

Sidney, startled by this opening, remained silent, and Mrs. Montague continued:—" Mr. Montague was, as I but too well guessed, extremely averse to hear the subject mentioned; nor could all I endeavoured to urge mitigate his resentment to Charles, or serve to convince him that he is not wilfully seeking to deceive me into supporting him in disobedience and impropriety. This would seriously grieve and even offend me, did I not consider it the mere effect of passion, and know that he will, in the course of a few days, more calmly consider the matter, and do Charles that justice he so well deserves. With respect to him, therefore, he must only avoid his father till he has recovered his temper, and he will then

listen to reason. Your cause I also tried to plead, but found my efforts equally useless; for, though your uncle declares that Mr. Ingram's name, as a suitor, he will never mention to you again, he yet professes himself violently displeased with your rejection of his proposals, and extremely offended by your expressing a desire to leave his house. This you may perhaps consider very unjust, after the declaration into which anger betrayed him; but, my dear Sidney, all human creatures are liable to error; and you must allow your uncle's former tenderness to plead his apology for any harshness he either has or may hereafter use. He has, however, expressed himself much pleased at your determination of accompanying me to Mrs. Talbot's this evening, and your resolution of being hereafter guided by my wishes in every instance of the kind. I must now leave you to prepare for our party; but, remember the advice of Charles, exert your spirits and your fortitude, and rest assured you will in the end more perfectly please and regain your uncle's confidence than by giving way to weak regret, and unnecessary, if not unjust resentment."

Mrs. Montague then quitted the room; and Sidney, though determined to follow her advice, and truly grateful for kindness so much beyond any she had hitherto shewn her, and that too at a time when she so peculiarly required it, could not recover from the shock of being deemed ungrateful by her uncle, and undeserving the kindness he had shewn her. With a countenance pale with grief and agitation, and a heart oppressed with apprehension, though decked with all the elegance her rank in life demanded, she stepped into Mrs. Montague's carriage.

The present party consisted of those Mrs. Talbot termed the cream of her acquaintance; and the rooms, though lighted and decorated with unusual splendour, were not more than moderately filled. As Sidney walked with Mrs. Montague through the superb apartments, and surveyed the company, all of high rank and splendidly attired, the conviction came forcibly home to her, as it has so frequently to the victims of ambition, how inadequate the pleasures of the world are to constitute felicity; and how wretched a substitute

outward magnificence can offer for the only real sources of enjoyment, internal peace, and domestic comfort.

Some time after her entrance she was joined by Mr. Savage, who, on perceiving her ill-disguised sorrow, paid her unusual attention. On Mrs. Montague's sitting down to cards, he accompanied Sidney and Anna to a seat, and shewed the most evident desire to reanimate Sidney's spirits.

Mr. Ingram, whose splendid fortune and family connexions rendered him a welcome acquisition to almost every party, had been invited on this occasion by Mrs. Talbot, not merely from these considerations, but also to compliment the Montague family. Of his present views respecting Sidney she was informed by Fanny, who, with weak and malevolent folly, communicated every circumstance that occurred in the domestic circle; and thus enabled Mrs. Talbot to guide her at pleasure to the accomplishment of her own and her brother's plans. As Mr. Ingram was anxious to render his devotion to Sidney, and her friends' approbation of his suit, as public as possible,

he gladly accepted the invitation; and, the moment he made his appearance, directed his steps to where Sidney was seated.

On seeing him approach, her spirits almost wholly forsook her; and, turning sick at the idea of being compelled to listen to a man who had so cruelly injured her happiness, she hastily begged of Mr. Savage to ask Anna, who was sitting next him, to come with her into another room, hoping thus to elude him.

Mr. Savage, guessing the cause of her paleness and agitation, on perceiving Mr. Ingram, who had stopped for a moment to speak to an acquaintance, exclaimed, with energy, " As Montague's friend, as one thought worthy of his confidence, I will take the liberty, in this instance, of acting in his place, and of advising you to desist from following hasty impulse of disgust, which must unavoidably betray to Ingram fear instead of dislike. Of that he would be mean enough to take advantage: trust to me for compelling him to a speedy retreat, if you will only honour me so far as to seem entirely engrossed by my conversation; and thus

shew him that you do not deem him worthy of so much attention as either to notice or avoid him."

"I am so little capable of judging for myself at present," said Sidney, faintly smiling, "that I will gratefully follow the advice your friendship to Charles has induced you so kindly to offer."

The pleasure Mr. Savage felt at this reply there was no occasion to express; and perceiving that Sidney's utmost effort could barely suffice to enable her to keep her seat, he continued to talk on any subject that occurred, without either desiring or giving time an answer.

As soon as Mr. Ingram could disengage himself from the gentleman who had so provokingly engrossed his attention, he approached, and, paying his compliments to Sidney, which she returned by a slight inclination of her head, he took a seat next her, which a lady, not finding her a very agreeable neighbour, had just vacated; and then, in a low voice, begged to know if he might have the honour of waiting

on her in the morning, to learn the result of the commission with which he had charged Mr. Montague.

"My uncle, sir," cried Sidney aloud, "will listen to you on any business whenever you please; there is no necessity for my personal interference."

"My dear Miss Montague," cried Mr. Savage, affecting great gallantry, and even frivolity of manner, "may I request you will have the goodness to direct your attention to that divine piece of sculpture supporting the lights? Did you ever see a finer countenance, or a more beautiful arm? I wonder where Mrs. Talbot procured it; I must certainly inquire."

To the object thus pointed out, Sidney gladly directed her eyes, pleased to escape even a cursory glance, or reply to Mr. Ingram, who, in a few moments recovering from his indignation, endeavoured in a low voice to plead against her determination of referring the settlement of a point so essential to his happiness entirely to Mr. Montague's decision.

The anger Sidney felt at his duplicity, in thus endeavouring to persuade her that on

herself alone he rested his hopes, though so well aware of her feelings, induced her to preserve a silence, which disdain and prudence prolonged. Mr. Savage, without seeming to notice Mr. Ingram's wish to engross her attention, continued with unremitting volubility to make trivial remarks on every object which the room afforded that could serve his purpose; frequently throwing out the most cutting sarcasms against Mr. Ingram, yet in such a way that he could not, without pointing the satire, affect to understand; and, though receiving no other answer from Sidney than a mere monosyllable of assent to the various opinions he advanced, he seemed perfectly satisfied.

Mr. Ingram, enraged beyond what he thought it prudent to display, and unable to cope with his fluent adversary, at length rose and quitted the place, secretly resolving that if ever Sidney was his wife, as he still firmly expected, she should atone for her present conduct by the most unqualified submission to his will; and that, from the moment she was his, neither Mr. Savage nor

Charles should approach her without his permission.

"I have now fulfilled my promise," cried Mr. Savage, with a laugh, "and will relieve you from an inundation of nonsense, which, however useful, you cannot have found very agreeable."

"The motive was so kind," said Sidney, "that it would render any conversation, however frivolous, pleasing; and surely I must feel grateful for the good nature that prompted you to undertake so disagreeable a task."

"It was only disagreeable," replied he, "because painful to you; the weapons I used, though the best I could devise for the purpose, were certainly not difficult to wield; but contempt and volubility would do more towards wearying Mr. Ingram than any other mode I could have adopted; as it not only wounded his vanity, by convincing him that you preferred such insignificance to his more stately and mature wisdom, but left him at a loss how to engage in a contest he was so unable to support."

Pleased and obliged by his good nature, involuntarily entertained by his ready wit and humour, and by the manly sense and penetration, which formed a striking trait in Mr. Savage's character, when divested of that shade of haughtiness, and self-importance, that too frequently obscured it, Sidney felt all the relief in his society and conversation that her present situation could allow; and, dreading to be again addressed by Mr. Ingram, she shewed no inclination to check or prohibit his attentions; and, though she talked at various times to different people, yet, as Mr. Savage never quitted her for a moment till he handed her to the carriage, her persecutor did not again approach her.

CHAP. XVI.

While the family were seated at breakfast next morning, at which Charles did not make his appearance, and at which Sidney felt extremely uncomfortable, as Mr. Montague had returned no other answer to her salutation than a distant bow, Kennedy entered the room with a note from his master to Mrs. Montague, to inform her that he was going out of town with a party of friends, and would not return till the following week.

On the contents of this note, which Mrs. Montague read aloud, Mr. Montague uttered no remark, though he appeared surprised, and he shrunk into a thoughtful silence, which he did not break during the remainder of his stay in the room.

Scarcely had he quitted it, when another servant entered with a note to Mrs. Montague, which she immediately put into Sidney's hand,

telling her, when she had read and considered its contents, to follow her to her room, and inform her what answer she wished to have returned.

Sidney, surprised, took the note, and, on casting her eye over it, found it came from Mr. Ingram, to request Mrs. Montague would have the goodness to appoint an hour when he might be permitted to see Miss S. Montague on particular business, concluding with a studied declaration of his friendship and respect for herself and her excellent family, and expressing a hope which she would exert her influence with Miss Montague in his favour.

Sidney, perceiving from her aunt's manner that she did not wish to have either Miss Watkins or Fanny apprized of the contents of this note, after gratifying Anna's curiosity by shewing it to her, followed Mrs. Montague to her dressing-room, and declared her intention of being guided, as to the answer, entirely by her advice.

"Tell me without disguise, Sidney," cried Mrs. Montague, "do you feel a hesitation in your own mind on the subject of Ingram's

proposals?—Does his situation in life, with the present gloomy prospect of your affairs, and the threatened loss of your fortune, induce you to waver between your dislike of the man and the advantage of the offer?"

"No, ma'am, most certainly not," replied Sidney, steadily; "Mr. Ingram's wife, with or without fortune, no temptation shall ever induce me to become."

"If so," said Mrs. Montague, "I will write a polite note to Mr. Ingram, appointing two o'clock for his visit; you will then explicitly announce your decision, and after that, according to your uncle's express determination, he must entirely give up the pursuit."

"And will you, ma'am," said Sidney, with involuntary eagerness, "have the goodness to accompany me? your presence and support would enable me to act as you may approve; and will confer an obligation which I shall gratefully feel."

"If I could with propriety do so," cried Mrs. Montague, "it would give me pleasure to gratify you; but, Sidney, my love, recollect that you are Mr. Montague's niece, and not mine; and as such he might naturally resent

any interference from me: besides, it might confirm him in the suspicion he entertains, that I would act any part to gratify my son. That I would sacrifice a great deal for my dear boy, is most true; but never have I, nor never will I, except by mediation and advice, interfere between him and his father. Let this convince you, my dear, that I ought not to comply with your request; but assure yourself, that it would give me great pleasure to oblige you."

To the propriety of these arguments Sidney could not remain insensible. After answering Mr. Ingram's note, Mrs. Montague gave her some necessary advice how to regulate her conduct, pointing out, that, so far from feeling displeasure at his application to her, she ought to consider it as the most convincing proof that Mr. Montague had declined any further interference in the affair; and it would also facilitate a reconciliation between Charles and his father, by precluding a possibility of future disagreements on the subject.

Flattered by her kindness, and convinced by reflection that the result of the interview

must depend on her own firmness, Sidney spent the intermediate time in studying how to act her part with propriety; and without needlessly irritating her uncle, by unnecessarily offending his friend, steadily to assure him of her unalterable determination. Conquering her disgust in the hope of never being again called on to shew him more than passing civility, and smiling at Anna's *badinage*, who advised her to treat him with all the disdain of a true tragedy heroine, she descended at the appointed hour to the drawing-room, if not perfectly free from agitation, yet with a composed countenance and manner.

In a short time Mr. Ingram was announced, whose compliments of inquiry she received with sufficient civility.

Mr. Ingram, augured a favourable change in her sentiments from her manner, and from even permitting his visit, notwithstanding the letter he had that morning received from Mr. Montague, which announced her absolute refusal of his proposals. In a set speech, fraught with elaborate expressions of regard, and intermingled with the most extravagant encomiums on her

beauty, and the felicity which her fair hand must confer on any man, he repeated in pompous detail the offers which Mr. Montague had already made in his name.

Sidney listened to him in silence, and with seeming patience: when he at length gave her an opportunity of speaking, she replied, with dignity and mildness, "After what has already passed on this subject, Mr. Ingram, I did hope the present application would have been spared; but since, sir, you deem it necessary to hear a second distinct avowal of my sentiments, I must again declare that my thanks are all I can now, or ever, offer in return for the high honour which your generous proposals have conferred on me."

This declaration Mr. Ingram endeavoured to prevail on her to recant; but, finding her unalterably steady in her determination, his countenance was overcast with an expression of such dark malignity as to give Sidney a sensation of terror at his presence, and of pleasure that no circumstances could force her into his power. After a few moments' silence, he said, in a voice wholly changed from the soft tone

in which he had before addressed her, "I shall no longer degrade myself, madam, by endeavouring to force on your acceptance proposals which you consider so inferior to your merit; but, when convinced of the fallacy of your present plans, you may perhaps regret having thrown away a settlement, which, with all its disadvantages, and notwithstanding your beauty, you may not so easily have again in your power."

"My plans, sir," cried Sidney, colouring with resentment, "are a matter of no consequence to any person but myself; nor can their disappointment ever lead me to regret a decision which I have made from motives that ought not to subject me to your insulting allusions: whatever may be my future fate I shall ever hold myself truly fortunate in not having yielded to the ill-judged persuasions of my friends, and sunk myself into an object of deserved contempt by listening to proposals which, however advantageous, must have consigned me to irretrievable misery."

Then rising, and curtseying, she hurried out of the room before Mr. Ingram could so far recover from the feelings, excited by this unexpect-

ed answer to the mean insult which disappointed passion had induced him to offer, as to make any effort to prolong her stay.

Anna, who was watching with eager curiosity to hear a relation of their conference, on seeing Sidney coming up stairs, hurried towards her; and, accompanying her to her room, listened with breathless impatience, while she detailed the whole of what had passed.

Anna's anger was unqualified at what she considered an insolent sneer at the unfortunate situation of a client, and which was possibly the effect of his own treachery or want of skill; but at length, bursting into a fit of laughter, she exclaimed, "Your calculating lover took so much time to weigh your beauty against his gold, and has been so long in the habit of replies and demurrers, that he ought, by this time, to have been a better judge of their comparative value. There were a few little items, however, which he forgot to put into the scale; and these are, his age, ugliness, and vile consequential manners. The next time I see him I will not fail to remind

him of the omission, and to advise him to strike a fairer balance on a future occasion. 'Surely, if the man were not a downright fool, he must know that no woman in her senses would marry him, except for his paltry wealth; and I should pity even our pretty little housemaid for making so wretched a bargain."

On hearing from Sidney a relation of what had passed, Mrs. Montague expressed much surprise how Mr. Ingram could have so far forgotten the respect due to her family and to himself, as to offer such an insult; and then unaffectedly congratulated her on being freed from the addresses of a man, who, from this disgusting specimen of his heart and temper, so well merited her refusal.

During the remainder of the day Mr. Montague treated Sidney as he had done in the morning; addressing her when compelled to do so; but never, in any other manner, appearing to notice that she was in the room; and Sidney, appalled by his sternness, and offended by his injustice, made no further effort to appease him.

In the course of the evening, which the family passed at home and without company,

Mr. Montague received a letter, which he had no sooner read than he pushed it across the table to Sidney, without uttering a word.

Mrs. Montague seeing the tears start into Sidney's eyes, and that she disdained to avail herself of the sullen permission her uncle had given her to peruse the letter, took it up, and, putting it into her hand, said, "Sidney, my dear, read this letter; and, if you wish to consult me on its contents, I will give you the best advice in my power."

Unable to speak, Sidney took it in silence, and her tears dropped fast on the paper as she cast her eye over the contents: with little surprise, she found that it came from Mr. Ingram, who declined any farther interference in her affairs; and informed Mr. Montague, that he had sent all her papers to Mr. Croker; he concluded by advising him as a friend to make the best compromise that he could for his niece with the Hamiltons; if, indeed, they were inclined to accept it, for he did not consider the cause to be worth any farther contention, as it would be found, certainly expensive, and, probably, fruitless.

The moment she had read the letter she

gave it, without speaking, to Mrs. Montague, who, hastily reading it, said, in a gentle but doubtful tone, to her husband, "Would you think it prudent, Orby, my dear, to take such a step? Would you advise Sidney to make such a compromise with Mr. Hamilton?"

"No compromise shall ever be made by *me* with Mr. Hamilton," replied Mr. Montague, coldly; "the title vested in my brother, in right of his wife, I will ever, to the utmost extent of the law, uphold; nor expose myself to insult by proposing any terms, which, if offered, would most likely be rejected. The ready money Charles received with his wife was expended on the property, and must, at all events, be accounted for. When Miss Sidney Montague comes of age, she may enter into what compromise she chooses; but I never will."

"Sidney, you know, will act as you direct, my dear," said Mrs. Montague. "She has no wish of opposing your inclination, except in refusing to marry a man, whom, from his conduct of this morning, and his present letter, I must now consider very unworthy of her."

"Lucy," cried Mr. Montague, sternly,

"we will wave the subject. The daughter of my brother shall never be injured while I can protect her; but I am not to be so easily duped by mere professions as I find you suffer yourself to be."

Mrs. Montague made no reply; and Sidney, unable longer to command her feelings, rose, and retired to her room, where she spent the remainder of the evening in total solitude and the deepest distress of mind, at finding how totally she had forfeited her uncle's confidence and affection. With feelings of deeply-wounded pride, she reflected on her inability to leave his house, which, joined to the dread of being left almost dependent on his bounty, added tenfold bitterness to her sorrow. "Ah!" she exclaimed "there are few or no situations in life that cannot be rendered infinitely more unhappy, however ready ungrateful mortals are to term themselves the most wretched of their species, and to accuse Providence of unmerited severity, while many blessings remain which wilful perverseness alone prevents them from enjoying." For, miserable as she had felt herself on her first separation from Sedley, she was

now, with poignant anguish, compelled to confess she was then comparatively happy; —to the no less certain separation from him was added the alienation of an uncle, who had assiduously studied her happiness and advantage; and aggravated by the conviction that she had, though innocently, been the means of involving so kind, so tender and affectionate a friend as Charles, in a quarrel with a father who had never before treated him with even momentary harshness; and which had obliged him to fly his paternal roof, to escape dissensions that he found it impossible to avoid.

How Mr. Montague could have suffered his understanding to be so warped and imposed on by malevolent misrepresentation, she could not imagine; but that he had done so was certain: and she could only suppose that some black tale of falsehood had been invented by Miss Watkins and Fanny, which, from regard to them, neither Mrs. Montague nor Charles had disclosed. Whatever anxiety she felt to discover it, she yet thought so much attention due to their wishes as to forbear the attempt; but Mrs. Montague's obvious desire

of concealing from her sister and daughter the contents of Mr. Ingram's note, convinced her that she could not be very erroneous in suspecting them; and the only reflection that allayed her grief was the hope, that, when Mr. Montague had a little recovered from the present mortification, his natural good sense would lead him to investigate the matter more narrowly; and thus oblige him to acquit not only his son, but herself, of the ill conduct with which he now ascribed to both.

The unyielding reserve and displeasure of Mr. Montague's manner soon banished this hope from Sidney's breast; as, without expressing his sentiments by words, his looks too clearly evinced the change his feelings had undergone. Obliged, in compliance with Mrs. Montague's wishes, and Charles's parting advice, to appear constantly in public, such unusual dissipation, joined to the internal wretchedness of her mind, at length produced a slow fever that preyed incessantly on her delicate constitution; though not so violently as to alarm her friends, or, to confine her to the house.

Mr. Ingram she met as usual in public, but he never made any further effort to engage her attention; and Mr. Savage, finding his services no longer required, remitted his former assiduous attendance. Though invariable in his endeavours to entertain and oblige her, he seemed to grow every day more pleased with her society, and more anxious that she should consider him as a friend; and as he made no advances towards assuming the character of a lover, Sidney shewed, without scruple or reserve, the gratitude and regard his conduct had inspired.

Instead of returning at the time he had appointed, Charles wrote to his mother, that he could not come to town till after another week; and, giving her a ludicrous account of himself and his adventures since he had left home, he concluded by desiring his love to his father and family, as usual, without seeming to foster a recollection of the terms on which they had parted.

His prolonged absence Mrs. Montague openly lamented; but Mr. Montague took no notice of the subject, vainly endeavouring

to hide the regret he deeply felt for the loss of his society.

Matters continued in the same train until the beginning of the week in which Charles had appointed for his return; when, as the family were all assembled, waiting a summons to dinner, he unexpectedly entered the drawing-room; and, after returning his mother's fond caresses with tenderness and pleasure, he went directly up to where his father was standing, with a countenance so full of conciliation, and held out his hand with such a smile of cordial confidence that Mr. Montague was unable to resist the impulse of his heart; and, pressing his hand, he welcomed his return with a tenderness which his former displeasure had seemed so little to promise. For the moment, he appeared as wholly to forget the past as his son either did or affected; but, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he seemed inclined to relapse into his former gloomy reserve; Charles, however, having gained his point of inducing him to converse as usual, was resolved not to lose the advantage; and gave loose to such exuberant spirits,

with so evident a wish to banish every disagreeable impression from his father's mind, that Mr. Montague's resolution gave way; and, before they retired for the night, he was surprised even into playful conversation; enjoying the society and vivacity of his son with the same cordial affection and animated pleasure he had ever shewn. Mrs. Montague, delighted at her son's return, and at his father's change of sentiment in his favour, felt a degree of happiness she had scarcely for years experienced.

Sidney's pleasure at this happy conclusion of a dissension which had filled her with incessant uneasiness, though as pure as Mrs. Montague's, was not so lively; nor was it unmixed with surprise at Charles's conduct to herself; for, after addressing her on his entrance in his accustomed manner, he seemed purposely to avoid her, and assiduously dedicated his whole attention to his parents and to his sisters, without appearing to observe that she was in the room. But a little reflection convinced her this conduct was intended to shew his father that he could

have no scheme respecting her, when, after so long an absence, he evinced no anxiety for her conversation; and it so naturally accounted for his indifference, as to remove the surprise his unusual coolness had at first excited.

CHAP. XVII.

On the following morning, as Sidney and Anna were sitting together in the breakfast-room, Charles entered, and soon convinced Sidney, by his eager inquiries into what had passed in his absence, and his animated pleasure on hearing that Ingram was finally dismissed, that no abatement of affection or interest had produced his inattention on the preceding evening. Yet he appeared hurried and embarrassed; and the moment he had congratulated her on being rid of so odious a lover, he left the room, and did not again make his appearance till after the remainder of the family had been some time seated at breakfast; when, though he did not so wholly neglect her as he had done on the preceding evening, and seemed uneasy and dissatisfied at his father's altered conduct, which his forced

mirth had then prevented him from observing, yet he was still under some restraint, and though not less kind or affectionate in his manner, he evidently repressed his former warmth and tenderness.

This change Anna accounted for, by supposing, that till Charles was fully restored to his father's confidence, which Fanny's insinuations had shaken, he was unwilling to put it into her power to lay hold on any part of his conduct to serve for an accusation that he and Sidney were still carrying on plots together. This Sidney thought so probable, that she resolved to follow his example, and carefully avoid any private or confidential conversation with him.

At the usual hour Mrs. Montague ordered her carriage; and Fanny declining to accompany her, she left the house with Miss Watkins and Anna.

Sidney, who had remained at home to write letters, was thus employed, when she was suddenly roused, and immeasurably surprised, at hearing a servant announce Sir Townly Beauchamp; who, entering the room,

without noticing her farther than by a passing bow, advanced to Fanny, who had risen on his entrance, and, pressing her hand with a fervour that not a little amazed Sidney, he told her his curricle was at the door; and requested she would have the goodness to recollect her promise, of taking a drive with him in the Park.

Fanny, with a smile of gratified vanity, said she would accompany him with pleasure, and left the room to prepare for that purpose. Sir Townly, without seeming to observe that Sidney was present, strolled round the apartment, humming and whistling a favourite air, and yawning and stretching with no slight degree of vociferation.

Offended by his extreme and intentional insolence, and feeling herself exonerated from any attention to the rules of politeness, which Sir Townly so grossly violated, Sidney coldly collected her papers and, without taking any notice of Sir Townly, quitted the room.

While ascending the stairs to her own apartment, she deliberated whether she ought not to

advise Fanny against so strange a proceeding as going out alone with a man avowedly odious to her father, and forbidden his house; when recollecting, that, if these reasons, and her own perfect knowledge of the laws of propriety and etiquette, could not restrain her, no argument she could use would have any other effect than to provoke the grossest sneers, she determined not to interfere. In this resolution, and proceeding quietly to her room, she was met by Fanny, who, looking at her, with a disdainful smile, exclaimed, "You may now try to reconcile yourself to papa by telling him that I have gone out with Sir Townly Beauchamp: it will be a pretty little artifice, to shew him what a good dutiful niece you are; but, take notice that, if I had cared in the least whether he knew it or not, I should not have put it into your power to tell him any thing on the subject."

"Your indifference to his happiness, and contempt of his approbation are equally conspicuous;" said Sidney, "but, indeed, it is not my wish to aggravate his feelings."

"Very probable indeed," cried Fanny, angrily; "you, whose thoughts are always employed in sowing dissensions in the family."

"Then pause, I conjure you, for one moment," replied Sidney, "before you decide on a step which would enable me to——"

"Not at present," interrupted Fanny, smiling maliciously; "I have much more agreeable occupation for my time; I shall leave you to reflect on the line, '*How sweet's the love that meets return!*' and advise you not to wither on the virgin thorn for one who will never be allowed to marry you; and, who, if not for your insidious arts, would never have had the desire. For, pretty as you think yourself, a pretty but treacherous beggar is not a very desirable acquisition; and so my papa will too late discover."

Then, hurrying down stairs, without waiting for a reply, she accompanied Sir Townly.

Sneers and malevolence, which Sidney's good sense had long since taught her to despise, the present situation of her mind rendered her unequal to bear. Deeply lamenting tha she had ever become an inmate of her uncle's

family, and regretting she had not had sufficient knowledge of the world, at the period of her father's death, to have determined with her uncle's permission to fix her residence at Mrs. Orpin's, she continued to weep with renewed bitterness, bewailing her separation from Sedley, who had always anxiously sought to alleviate the painful feelings to which she was sometimes exposed, and who, had he been permitted, would have removed her from the reach of insult and reproach; till, feeling a sort of indignant sorrow at the recollection of the malignant triumph which a sight of her agitation would give to Fanny, if she did not endeavour to conquer and dispel every trace of it before her return, she summoned all her fortitude to her assistance, and returned to the drawing-room. Anxious to drown reflections which merely inflicted useless torture, she sat down to the piano-forte.

She was thus engaged when Mrs. Montague returned; who, entering the drawing-room alone, asked her if she knew where Fanny was, as she wished to speak to her.

"She is gone out to take a drive, ma'am,"

replied Sidney, unwilling to say with whom, till, Mrs. Montague reiterating the question, she said, with Sir Townly Beauchamp.

"Sir Townly Beauchamp!" repeated Mrs. Montague, starting: "surely you must be mistaken;—at all events, Mrs. Talbot must have been of the party."

"She was not, I believe, ma'am," replied Sidney; "I certainly did not see her. Sir Townly came in here alone, and asked Fanny to go out with him in his curricle; but I request that my uncle may not hear this, at least from you, as Fanny has very unjustly accused me of wishing to incense him against her."

Mrs. Montague, in great consternation at this information, made no reply; and Sidney, unwilling to harass or distress her, did not repeat her request, certain she would, from tenderness to Fanny, be very unwilling to have her husband acquainted with the circumstance.

"How, my dear Sidney," exclaimed Mrs. Montague, at length, "could you allow Fanny to do any thing so improper as to go out alone with Sir Townly Beauchamp? Why did you not represent the displeasure her father and

brother would feel at hearing of such conduct, which in a young woman, so publicly known as Fanny, cannot be concealed from them?"

To this question Sidney replied by relating, though in softened terms, the conversation that had passed between them on the stairs, and Fanny's declaration that she wished it to reach her father, or at least was indifferent on the subject; adding, that after such a speech there could have been no use in further interference.

"What can she mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Montague, in great agitation: "surely she cannot, have encouraged Sir Townly Beauchamp's addresses. I received a hint from a friend that she did, and I spoke to her on the subject, but she only laughed at my apprehensions, and declared them utterly groundless. Surely she cannot have been guilty of the deception of which you and my dear Charles have been accused: and yet how could she else, or indeed from any consideration, have acted a part so glaringly improper?"

Sidney, surprised at this information, which led her to suspect that Fanny had practised the dissimulation of which she had every reason

to believe she had so unjustly accused herself and Charles, remained silent.

Mrs. Montague could neither think nor speak on any other subject; and Sidney, though unable to offer advice, while so wholly ignorant of Fanny's intentions, vainly endeavoured to sooth her; but, the more she reflected, the more certain she became that Fanny had deceived her, and consequently the greater the terror and uneasiness she endured.

They were still conversing on this subject, when, hearing Mr. Montague rap at the door, Mrs. Montague exclaimed, "Sidney, my love, don't let a hint of this reach either your uncle or Charles till I first see and speak to Fanny, unless her own imprudence betrays it to them."

Sidney had scarcely time to reply, when Mr. Montague and Charles entered the room together.

Seeing Mrs. Montague look pale and agitated, Mr. Montague instantly advanced, and, casting a look of suspicion and displeasure at Sidney, tenderly inquired if any thing had occurred to distress her.

"No, no;" replied Mrs. Montague, resuming her usual look and manner; "but I am extremely fatigued, with driving about all day."

This answer satisfied Mr. Montague; and, for the first time since her residence at her uncle's, Sidney saw how perfectly capable Mrs. Montague was of concealing her feelings, and how unequal any person, to whom she did not intrust them, was of judging of their full extent; and it in a moment convinced her, that, though not displayed by more than coldness and occasional expressions of slight displeasure, Fanny had as completely poisoned her mother's mind against her, till undeceived by Charles, as she had her father's, who with undissembled vehemence avowed his sentiments.

Charles, who knew his mother's every turn of countenance, and was infinitely better acquainted with her feelings than his father, was not so easily satisfied; and, throwing himself beside her on the sofa, endeavoured by playful attention to banish the uneasiness that oppressed her. His affection was a cordial of

such potent efficacy, as, under any circumstances, to lull her fears and feelings for the moment to rest.

While he was thus engaged, a violent noise in the street attracting his attention, he started from his seat, and, throwing up a window, looked out; but in another moment, drawing in his head, exclaimed, with the utmost astonishment, "What the d——l can be the meaning of this?—What can have induced Fanny to go out alone with Sir Townly Beauchamp?"

"Fanny go out alone with Sir Townly Beauchamp!" repeated Mr. Montague, advancing towards the window: "it is not possible."

When perceiving that it really was so, as Sir Townly, who had occasioned the tumult by knocking down a passenger crossing the street, had just reached the hall-door, he turned to Mrs. Montague, and said, rather angrily, "Did you know of this, Lucy? Had Fanny your consent to go out with Sir Townly?"

"No," replied Mrs. Montague, terrified at the prospect of the scene that would now

ensue; "I knew nothing of the matter, as I was not at home when she went out."

"Were you, Sidney?" cried Mr. Montague; "tell me quick, and tell me truth."

"I was, sir," replied Sidney, "but I could not in any way interfere."

"Certainly not," exclaimed Charles, hastily: "Fanny is old enough to judge for herself, and would not have been restrained by you."

"If old enough," said Mr. Montague, "she is not wise enough; and if such are, at her years, her notions of propriety, she should again return to the school-room, to learn better."

At that moment Fanny entered the room, followed by Miss Watkins and Anna, and was advancing with the most easy assurance to take a seat beside her mother, when Mr. Montague, arresting her progress in the middle of the room, sternly demanded by whose permission she had gone out with Sir Townly Beauchamp.

"I consider myself my own mistress," replied Fanny, carelessly, "and therefore at liberty to act as I please."

"You do!" replied Mr. Montague, starting with astonishment, at receiving such a reply; "and you venture to tell me so!"

"And why should I not, papa?" cried Fanny, retreating to the sofa, a little startled by her father's countenance; "have I not a very good right to choose my own companions? Pray what objection can you have to my going out with Sir Townly Beauchamp?"

"What objection!" repeated Mr. Montague; "are you weakly or wilfully insensible to the impropriety of going out with any gentleman, unattended by any of your own family, but more particularly with a man of Beauchamp's infamous character and abandoned principles?"

"Did you ever hear any thing like this, mamma?" cried Fanny, bursting into tears of passion, "to be spoken to in such a manner, for only going out to take a drive with a man of such fashion as Sir Townly."

"It was very improper, Fanny, my love," said Mrs. Montague mildly, "and conduct you neither ought to have practised, nor must again think of repeating. Dry your tears then, my dearest child, and assure your father

you will not again do so, and he will kindly consent to forgive the past."

Fanny instantly dried her tears, as her mother desired, but with no intention of any farther following her advice ; for, again addressing her father, she exclaimed, " Why, papa, should you expect such a compliance from me ? Sir Townly Beauchamp is a man of high rank and fashion, and one of whom I perfectly approve ; and if Charles was so mean and imprudent as to get into low quarrels, and then throw the blame on him, that is no reason I should not act as I please."

" You shall find," exclaimed Mr. Montague, fiercely, thrown off his guard by this daring defiance of his authority, " that you shall act as I please ; and, since you are so barefaced as even to defend the conduct you have practised, and are so little fit to be trusted to your own guidance with respect to a man whom I forbid my house in consequence of his profligate character, I now tell you to beware how you again venture to leave home, unless with your mother's, or with my express assent : and I absolutely prohibit you hence-

forth from speaking to Sir Townly Beauchamp, in public or in private: his insolence and presumption I will chastise as they deserve."

Fanny's rage now rose to such a height, that she could scarcely sob out her resolution to act as she pleased, and her determination both to speak to Sir Townly Beauchamp, and to treat him as she thought proper.

Mr. Montague, enraged beyond endurance fiercely commanded her to leave the room, and no longer expose herself: while Mrs. Montague, terrified at the consequences of such a scene, with tears entreated that she would retire with her.

"I will not," sobbed Fanny, in a voice scarcely audible: "I will do what I please, and no human being shall prevent me."

"Charles, my love," cried Mrs. Montague, alarmed at the fury of her husband's countenance, on hearing his daughter so daringly declare her resolution of setting his authority at defiance, and following her own inclination, "will you come here, and try to prevail on your sister to retire?"

Charles, whom a dislike to interfere had hitherto withheld from taking any part, could not, at his mother's call, longer remain an inactive spectator. Going hastily to the sofa, and attempting to take Fanny's hand, he said, " You had better command yourself, Fanny, and come with me; I entreat that you will not farther exasperate my father."

" Do not touch me, I will not go with you," cried Fanny; " I will do as I please, and you nor no person shall prevent me."

" Leave the room this moment," exclaimed Mr. Montague, " and no longer venture to brave or disobey me."

" No! no!" was all Fanny could articulate, and, catching hold of the arm of the sofa, she obstinately clung to it, screaming and sobbing through excess of passion, which she found herself unable, in any other way, to express.

" Take her away, Charles, my dear Charles," cried Mrs. Montague, aghast with fright, on seeing her husband advance towards the sofa.

Charles, equally anxious to end this shocking contest, and to oblige his mother, took

Fanny in his arms, and, in despite of her frantic exclamations and her violence of opposition, carried her to her apartment, followed by his mother, and by Miss Watkins, who thought such an attention due to her sister, on seeing her so agitated; while Sidney, though anxious to offer her assistance and consolation to Mrs. Montague, knew, from Fanny's dislike to herself, that her presence would only augment her irritation.

Mr. Montague, unable to restrain or disguise his indignation, paced the room in silence; Sidney and Anna, equally astonished and terrified, neither speaking, nor moving from their seats.

Charles, finding his presence, by increasing Fanny's violence, merely subjected him to her abuse and reproaches, without tending to sooth or assist his mother, soon returned to the drawing-room, where Mr. Montague, forgetting his recent displeasure and coolness with him, exclaimed, "What, my dear Charles, am I to think of your sister's conduct? What am I to suppose are her views, with respect to Beauchamp, which can have urged her to such

outrageous defiance of all decency, as well as of my authority?

"Her present conduct, I am convinced, sir," cried Charles, "is the result of Beauchamp's advice, acting on her own ungovernable temper;—his views, her fortune, and his character and embarassments, render sufficiently obvious; and I strongly suspect that Mrs Talbot has not acted very honourably in the business. I remonstrated with Fanny on observing that Beauchamp continued to pay her attentions which could not be misunderstood, the last evening I saw them together at her house. As Fanny was afterwards on her guard, I never could discover how far she intended to follow the advice I then gave her; though, that she has not done so is pretty certain. You had better, I think, sir, forbid her further intimacy with Mrs. Talbot; and if you will allow me," added he, in a whisper, "I will call on Beauchamp, and demand an explanation."

"No," cried Mr. Montague, not too much off his guard to attend to prudence; "I will take that office on myself. It would be very indelicate and improper to render the

affair more public by such a step. Insolence to me Beauchamp will be very careful of shewing; and, I will, as her father, prohibit his again speaking to her. Matters, as you justly observe, could never have been carried to such lengths without Mrs. Talbot's knowledge and connivance; and a member of my family shall never again enter her house. But how can all this account for Fanny's conduct? She could not be ignorant of Beauchamp's character, after all she heard at the time he entangled you in that disgraceful squabble. By what means can he have seduced her into such incredible misconduct, or urged her to violate every tie of affection and respect?"

"Fanny, sir," cried Charles, "is not quite so perfect a judge of mankind as she, unfortunately, considers herself. She has charged me with throwing on Beauchamp the blame I deservedly incurred. Had she been that night a witness of his conduct, she would not have formed such an opinion; nor would she have accused me," continued he, looking steadily at his father, while a momentary glow passed

over his countenance, "of falsehood I have never, on any subject, been guilty of. But, since she has suffered her understanding to be so grossly imposed upon, argument is, at present, useless, and only excites her to that vehemence which is better to avoid than to resent. If you think, sir," added he again, lowering his voice to a whisper, "that my calling out Beauchamp would only serve to render the affair more public, as it is, indubitably, disgraceful for her to be addressed by a man of his character, I will yield to your wishes; though I do feel the most ardent desire to chastise him for his insolence, in venturing so openly to dare the resentment of her family."

There was a something in this speech that appeared to have almost magical influence on Mr. Montague. His rage instantly forsook him; and, taking his son's hand, and tenderly pressing it, he said, in a low suppressed voice, "I have been unjust, Charles, undeservedly harsh, unwarrantably suspicious; but forgive me: I have been deceived by those who have practised the deception of which they have accused others."

"Since you are convinced that you were deceived, sir," cried Charles, with animation, "I am perfectly satisfied. I am not so base as to remember momentary injustice, or to forget all the kindness and indulgence you have shewn me. But try, sir, to recover from the shock you have received, and to determine what part you think most proper for either of us to take in this business."

"We will speak of it in the evening," replied Mr. Montague: "I cannot, at present collect my thoughts for any farther discussion."

Charles making no reply, uninterrupted silence prevailed, till dinner was announced; when he told Anna to go to his mother, and request that she would come down stairs.

In a little time Mrs. Montague appeared, with eyes swollen with weeping, and accompanied by Miss Watkins. After telling Charles that she had desired Anna to sit with her sister, who was very unwell, she led the way to the dining-room; and Mr. Montague made no remark on Anna's absence, concluding that her mother not only wished to have her remain

with her sister, but was also desirous to prevent the suspicion of the servants that there was any other canse than illness for Fanny's violent screams.

Charles, observing how much beyond her usual power of concealment his mother was agitated, exerted himself to the utmost, not only to entertain her, but to divert the attraction of the servants from observing. As formerly, he openly addressed his conversation to Sidney; and however surprised at the change, she endeavoured, as far as she could, to assist him; but Miss Watkins sat in stiff and dignified silence, not choosing to censure Fanny till she saw what turn matters would take; nor wishing to appear to Mr. Montague insensible of the flagrant impropriety of her conduct."

When the cloth was removed, and the servants withdrawn, Mr. Montague, turning to his lady, said, "You are, I believe, Lucy, engaged to a party at Mrs. Talbot's this evening: I request that you will send an apology, though without assigning any reason, as it is my wish entirely to break off any

farther intimacy with a woman whom I consider as having acted so dishonourably; and you will oblige me extremely by, in future, denying her admittance to your house and avoiding her society."

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Montague, "I shall do whatever you wish; but I beg and entreat, Orby, my dear, that you will endeavour to restrain your displeasure; and suffer me, by gentleness and entreaty, to induce Fanny to comply with your wishes. She has not, you know, been accustomed to harshness; and her spirits are too delicate and irritable to enable her to endure it without prejudice to her health."

"I have very little inclination," exclaimed Mr. Montague coldly, "for a repetition of such another scene; but implicit obedience to my commands Fanny shall yield; and, since her own discretion has not been sufficient to preserve her from falling a victim to the snares of Mrs. Talbot and her brother, I am determined rigorously to exert my authority to save her from becoming the dupe of a profli-

gate and abandoned villain. In thus acting I shall only fulfil the duty of a parent: and if to your wishes and representations she yields that submission which she thought proper to refuse to me, I shall be satisfied; though it will require a long time to restore her to that affection I once felt. But do not, through ill-judged tenderness to her, deceive me into believing that she will act as I desire; for, without her absolute promise of never again, publicly or privately, speaking to Beauchamp, this house she shall not leave, except under her brother's guardianship or mine. Beauchamp's character would render his alliance a disgrace to any family; and into our's I am resolved he shall not enter."

To Mr. Montague's injunctions Mrs. Montague promised the most implicit obedience; declaring that the prospect of such a connexion could not be more disagreeable to him than it was to herself, as she should shudder at the thoughts of consigning her beloved child to the protection of such a man; and that, as by Mrs. Talbot alone could Fanny have been

so deceived respecting the character of Sir Townly Beauchamp, she would, in future, decline her acquaintance any farther than mere ceremony demanded, for her sorrow was unbounded at having ever confided a daughter to her care."

"We have been both," cried Mr. Montague, "very grossly deceived in Mrs. Talbot; and never can I sufficiently regret that I did not, on the first discovery of Beauchamp's character, break off all intercourse with his family, as I now clearly see the reason he was so anxious to be introduced to mine: yet, for my daughter I could not, rationally, have apprehended any danger, when I believed there was no woman of honour or integrity who would not have turned with disgust from his addresses. To my son alone did I conceive any danger could result from his acquaintance—but, he, who ought to have been implicitly trusted, I have been led to suspect; while in that obdurate and treacherous girl I have too implicitly confided!"

Mrs. Montague, though grieved at hearing such a censure on her favourite daughter, could

not enter into any justification of conduct which she knew too well deserved it; but, quitting the table, she expressed her intentions of sending an apology to Mrs. Talbot, and of then retiring to her daughter's room, and endeavouring to influence her to compliance with her father's orders.

Sidney also rising to accompany her aunt and Miss Watkins, as she was passing near Mr. Montague's chair, he suddenly held out his hand, saying, "I have shewn you unkindness, Sidney, that you did not deserve; but for which I will now endeavour to atone, by every exertion in my power to secure your future happiness and comfort. Since you have not been induced, by my advice, to secure what I considered a most eligible establishment, let this assurance satisfy you, my dear, that I feel no farther resentment for your refusal to comply with my wishes; and therefore banish all remembrance of the past from your mind."

Sidney, surprised and affected at this unexpected kindness, pressed her uncle's hand; and, while tears involuntarily started to her

eyes, replied, " To have been considered ungrateful by you, sir,—unworthy your care and tenderness,—gave me, indeed, severe pain: but in no instance have I been deaf to your respected advice, except in refusing to marry a man against whom my whole heart rose with disgust; and who was so dishonourable as to make use of the peculiar distress of my situation to influence my choice. I do not say this," continued she, seeing her uncle's colour rise, " from mere resentment to Mr. Ingram, but to account for my unconquerable dislike to such ungenerous art."

" Mr. Ingram," cried Mr. Montague haughtily, " had no right to make the slightest allusion to your situation. I grant that it was highly dishonest to work upon your feelings by means which he could only have acquired in professional confidence. However regard for your interest made me desirous to promote the connexion, Mr. Ingram is much mistaken in supposing that I attached such importance either to his wealth or to his services, as not to consider your talents and disposition as a full equivolent. I am perfectly adequate

to the care of every member of my family, and I will yet force the Hamiltons to submit, let them take what steps they please; and that without having recourse to a degrading compromise."

"The old gentleman," cried Charles, laughing "has, like many other crafty politicians, taken a great deal of pains to very little purpose."

"The subject has been sufficiently debated already," said Mr. Montague hastily, "and others of more immediate importance demand my attention. Leave me now, my dear Sidney, to consult with Charles, on what measures we shall pursue respecting Beauchamp's insolent conduct of this morning; and let all disagreeable transactions between us be buried in oblivion."

"They shall, sir," cried Sidney; "and never will I in future remember aught but your generous kindness, and affection."

Then, hurrying away, she proceeded to the drawing-room, where she found Anna alone; who, with anger and consternation, told her that Fanny had, without reserve, declared her determination of acting as she pleased;

she had even expressed violent displeasure at an apology having been sent to Mrs. Talbot's, saying that it was Sidney's and her brother's arts which had influenced her father to act so unkindly: but she would convince them they should not control her with impunity.

"That she was the person who influenced my uncle to the unkindness with which he treated Charles and myself," cried Sidney, "I cannot doubt, as he has almost expressly said so. Had Fanny never practised the arts of which she so unjustly accuses me, and had she been on her guard against the insidious arts of others, she would not have involved herself in a situation, which she will, I fear, find very disagreeable."

"She is perfectly equal to the contest," cried Anna; "and though I was shocked to hear her speak in such a manner to papa, I could scarcely forbear laughing at seeing her in such an outrageous passion, and hearing her scream with such violence. I really wondered at Charles's patience in troubling himself to carry her away as he did; and the only return she has made for it was to abuse him without

intermission while I sat with her. Ill-natured and tyrannical as she is, if she was terrified or unhappy I should pity her; but for such a heroine, so well fitted and inclined to fight her own battles, I must own I have no compassion to throw away."

Early in the evening they were joined by Charles. In reply to Anna's inquiries he informed them that his father had gone out for the purpose of waiting on Sir Townly, who had sent him a note requesting a private conference, on hearing from Mrs. Talbot that Mrs Montague had declined going to her party. "I was very anxious to have accompanied him," continued he; "but he was so apprehensive of my seeking a quarrel with Beauchamp, which would soon make the affair known to the public, that he would not permit my attendance."

"And surely, Charles," cried Sidney, "you cannot wish to engage in such a quarrel; it would very seriously injure Fanny in the estimation of the world."

"I do not," replied he; "more cool reflection has convinced me, that, so far from wiping

away the insult Beauchamp has offered to the family, by leading Fanny to act so indecorously, it would merely set the town inquiring into what may not otherwise engage their attention. Fanny, however, had better consider that her character is at stake. I reluctantly interfered to-day, when I saw my father so justly displeased with her; but I am determined to keep a very strict eye on her conduct in future, which it would have been better for her to have regulated properly than to have misrepresented mine."

"She told me distinctly," cried Anna, "that she would not give up Sir Townly's acquaintance."

"She must give up his acquaintance," said Charles vehemently; "her doing so shall not be left to her own choice."

"She will, perhaps, abandon her resolution," exclaimed Sidney, dreading lest Anna's heedless information might rouse Charles to some violence, "after my aunt speaks to her, and reasons with her, calmly, on its imprudence. Fanny has been so little accus-

tomed to control, that she naturally resists any opposition to her wishes, till herself convinced of their impropriety."

"If her temper was the worst trait in her disposition," cried Charles with a sigh, "bad as it is, I could forgive her; but," added he, checking himself, "we will speak no more on this lamentable subject."

With this prohibition Sidney gladly complied, feeling it equally disagreeable with himself, and anxious to lull the tumult of his mind.

At tea they were joined by Miss Watkins, but Mrs. Montague remained with Fanny. Miss Watkins, addressing her conversation to Charles, expatiated, with great warmth, on Fanny's misconduct; till, suddenly interrupting her, he said, "Though Fanny has behaved very ill in many other ways beside this, she has but seldom laboured under your prudent and measured censure, when you well knew her insinuations were most unjust and her conduct to me most unsisterly. That being the case, I beg you will spare any fur-

ther reflections on her, which are only uttered because she is in disgrace with my father."

Miss Watkins coloured at this unexpected reproof; and, after muttering something about the impropriety of addressing such language to her, she remained silent.

About nine o'clock Mr. Montague entered the drawing-room, with a countenance on which grief and anger were legibly impressed; and desired Anna to go to her sister's room, and tell her that he wanted to see and speak with her that moment.

This command Anna obeyed, when Charles, advancing to his father, with eyes sparkling with indignation, exclaimed, "Has Beauchamp been insolent to you, sir?"

"No," replied Mr. Montague, "not by threats or manner; but he had the audacity to say that he had made proposals to Fanny, which she had accepted; and that, however reluctant to offend me, he could not take his dismission from any other person than herself. I left him without making any reply; and now wish to learn from Fanny if it is possible that

he can have asserted truth. If he has told a falsehood—"

Mr. Montague here checked himself, and remained silent; nor did Charles again speak till Anna returned to the room with a message from Fanny that she was going to bed, as she did not feel herself at all well, but would see and speak to him in the morning.

On hearing this message Mr. Montague was leaving the room, when Charles, apprehensive he might be going to Fanny's apartment, followed, and, detaining him, said, " Do not, sir, enter on the subject with Fanny to-night; leave her for a few hours to my mother's arguments and to her own reflections,—she will then be better disposed to listen to you, and to acknowledge your authority."

" You are right," cried Mr. Montague, returning; " I will give her the time she desires."

Then, throwing himself on a sofa, he maintained in a gloomy silence. Charles, well knowing that all his efforts could not cheer his father, nor diminish his grief, took up a book and read till summoned to

supper, at which Mrs. Montague declined appearing. As soon as it was over, Sidney retired to her room, feeling all sense of her own personal misfortunes for the moment swallowed up in the new and distressing scenes that had taken place in her uncle's family, and trembling with apprehension for the consequences that might result from Fanny's determination to brave and oppose her father.

CHAP. XVIII.

At breakfast next morning Fanny made her appearance with a countenance wearing no trace of indisposition, though very strongly marked by a mixed expression of defiance and resentment. She neither spoke to her father nor brother, nor did they take the slightest notice of her.

Mrs. Montague, who appeared nearly overwhelmed with apprehension, anxiously endeavoured to bring Fanny into better temper; but her efforts were repulsed in a way, so highly insolent, that Charles could scarcely so far command his feelings as to forbear expressing them.

Mr. Montague, rising when breakfast was over, told Fanny, in a stern voice, to accompany him to the library.

"Whatever you wish to say to me, papa," replied she, "I can as well hear where I am;

I have no desire to conceal my affairs: I am not, like Charles, trying to deceive people respecting my sentiments."

"Fanny," cried Charles, starting with angry surprise from the table,—but quickly reining in his feelings, from tenderness to his mother, he proceeded,—I am willing to forget the past, and still wish to act towards you as a brother; but for my poor mother's sake, if not for your own, be tranquil."

Fanny made no reply; and Sidney, unwilling to be present at a conference which Fanny wished to be in the presence of her mother and family, from feeling more confidence than she could command in a private interview with her father, was rising to retire when she was suddenly arrested in her progress by hearing Fanny exclaim, "Are you afraid, Sidney, that in revenge for your conduct, I should inform papa of your plans and wishes? But I can tell you he knows them very well already."

"All my plans and wishes my uncle does indeed know," replied Sidney, steadily, though surprised at Fanny's thus betraying herself: "Yet to what you allude I must avow myself

ignorant; as, whatever may be my wishes, plans I have none."

"You had better be silent, Fanny," exclaimed Charles fiercely; "you had better not render your malice and duplicity as public as your contempt of decency."

"I dare say," cried Fanny, smiling disdainfully, "that you would much prefer my being silent; but do you think I will tamely allow you to conceal your intentions of marrying Sidney unknown to papa, while you try to persuade him that I have a similar scheme; and while you endeavour to prejudice him against a man so greatly your superior? I believe every person must allow a man of Sir Townly Beauchamp's rank, fashion, and consequence, to be a very different connexion from Sidney Montague, who has no other fortune than a lawsuit; and no other accomplishments than cunning to deceive papa and your whole family, and to induce you to follow her example."

Perfectly overpowered by this harangue which at once revealed the real cause of Mr. Montague's late displeasure at Charles and herself, Sidney, unable to speak, sunk almost

breathless on a chair; when Fanny triumphantly exclaimed, "See now, papa, see if Sidney can deny the truth of what I say."

The rage and astonishment of Charles at this daring artifice had hitherto choaked his utterance, but perceiving that Mr. Montague alternately looked from himself to Sidney, while a shade of the darkest suspicion stole over his features on beholding her violent agitation, which drove Fanny and Sir Townly Beauchamp from his recollection, in what he considered so irrefragable a proof of the falsehood and duplicity of her and his son, he debated for a moment how to act, while an universal and even appalling stillness reigned through the apartment. At length conquering his indignation, and assuming composure, he approached his father, and said, "No resentment which I feel for having been unjustly accused of the deepest duplicity and falsehood, shall, under existing circumstances, induce me to violate the duty and respect I owe to you, sir; by delaying to exculpate myself and Sidney from the base aspersion that has

been cast on the honour of both. Such an insult I did hope she would have been spared from hearing; still more did I hope that it could have made no impression upon your mind. I now, sir, in her presence, and before my mother, in this public manner, again assure you on the solemn honour of a gentleman, that no feelings have ever subsisted between us except what we have uniformly and openly avowed, and such as our near relationship justifies and demands. How far I could have preserved my heart, had she not so soon and so distinctly bestowed her affections on another, I cannot say; but, after knowing that they were engaged to Major Sedley, I could feel no wish to make the trial, nor would she have been content with such an exchange. Had we felt the attachment of which we have been suspected, there could have been no occasion for disguise, for, equal in birth and situations, and far my superior in personal attractions, no possible objection could have been urged against her. You can now judge, sir, what must be my feelings—my horror—at seeing a beloved father led to suspect

me of deliberate falsehood, and imposed on by insinuations, the malignity of which should have been defeated by their folly. Declare then, sir, whether you credit my assertions, or whether you entertain a doubt of my honour; for by that which I have so solemnly pledged I swear, if you again waver, again yield to such perfidious acts, I will bid an eternal adieu to home, and go abroad with the first regiment under orders."

"I am satisfied,—I am satisfied, Charles," cried Mr. Montague, "but for such a scene as this I was not indeed prepared."

Sidney having recovered from the first shock which an accusation she had so little expected had given to her feelings, and all her pride roused not only by Fanny's declaration, but by that also which Charles had made, slowly rose, and approaching her uncle, while all the native spirit of her disposition shone forth in her countenance, said with serenity, though with great firmness, "Had you, uncle, given me any reason to suspect the cause of your displeasure, I should not have suffered you to remain so long in error. After the solemn

declaration Charles has just made, I shall not insult him by seeming to consider any confirmation of the truth of his assertions necessary;—I shall only say, that, after what so recently passed at Belle Vue, and your knowledge of my attachment to Major Sedley," continued she, while a transient blush tinged her cheeks, "I could not have believed it possible that you could have harboured such suspicions, or thought so meanly of me as to suppose me capable of endeavouring to seduce your son from his duty, with a heart confessedly given to another. Why Fanny has thought proper to make such a charge, I cannot guess; but, since she has done so, I must now not only request but insist, on being permitted to remove to Mrs. Orpin's, and to live under her protection. From you, sir, I shall still expect every care and attention which you may consider due to the orphan child of a brother whom you so tenderly loved: I shall ever remember with the warmest affection, and the sincerest gratitude, all the kindness you have shewn me, but to reside in your house after the transactions of this day I should consider an insult to my father's memory."

"Sidney," exclaimed Mr. Montague, in a voice struggling between anger and violent emotion, "I am not answerable for the gross violation of propriety and hospitality that has so justly wounded your pride and insulted your delicacy. You have called on your father's memory;—I now ask you, do you or can you think, that, however offended at being as I thought deceived, I would willingly or wantonly insult or injure his orphan child? Or do you think he would approve your present declaration of withdrawing yourself from the house and protection of a brother he so sincerely loved, and who considered you as the most sacred proof of his affection?"

"I know not, sir," replied Sidney, trembling and agitated, "what would be his feelings or directions; but surely there can be no impropriety; in my going to live with Mrs. Orpin, indeed it is the only prudent step I can now take."

"Never," cried Mr. Montague, angrily, "shall you, with my consent, leave my house, unless to reside in your own, or that of your husband. Never will I so far justify the insinuations of art and malice, or suffer the world

to believe that I again threw you in Major Sedley's way, when so well convinced as I am of his father's sentiments; and, if you do not wish to offend me beyond any power of atonement, you will never again make such a proposal."

"It is in truth ill-timed and improper, Sidney," exclaimed Charles; "a proposal in which you cannot think of persisting. Surely you do not wish to insult my father, nor to justify to the world, either Major Sedley, or his father's unwarrantable insolence."

"No," cried Sidney, weeping, "I have no such intentions: advise—instruct me, and I will act as you please."

"Then, my dear niece," said Mr. Montague, "act as you have hitherto done: receive, with affection, the care and protection of an uncle, who will never consider you in any other light than that of a daughter."

Sidney, agitated and irresolute, knew not what to say, or to resolve. Mr. Montague, without again speaking to her, went forward to his eldest daughter, and said, "I should be

glad to know, madam, what you designed by your unjustifiable attack on Sidney Montague and your brother?"

"I don't know what reason you have to speak to me in this manner, sir," said Fanny, in a tone of defiance. "Did not my aunt see into Charles's plans as well as me, did she not just tell you what I did; though she does not choose to speak now, because Charles is present?"

"I was deceived," cried Miss Watkins, in evident perturbation; "and I don't see any use in calling on me, or what reference it has to any thing your father wishes to say to you."

Mr. Montague, without taking any notice of Miss Watkins, said to his daughter, "You prove, madam, that you have very amply benefited by Mrs. Talbot's instructions, in so artfully endeavouring to elude the purpose for which I desired to speak to you; but it shall not avail you more than her dissimulation and dishonourable conduct will serve her or her brother; and I desire you, without farther subterfuge or prevarication, to tell me, have you accepted proposals from Sir Townly Beau-

champ, or authorized him to make the application he has done to me?"

"Oh, mamma!" cried Fanny, trembling with passion, "did you ever hear any thing like the manner in which my papa speaks; and merely because Charles chooses to deceive him, and to invent falsehoods of Sir Townly?"

"Fanny, my love," exclaimed Mrs. Montague in great agitation, "how can you speak in such a manner of your brother? or why do you not reply to your father's question? You surely cannot have encouraged the addresses of such a man as Sir Townly; and why not say so at once?"

"And do you too intend to take Charles's part against me, mamma?" cried Fanny: "but I don't care; I am my own mistress, and I will act as I please."

"Answer me directly to the question I have asked," demanded Mr. Montague sternly. "Have you, or have you not, authorized Sir Townly to make proposals to me?"

"I have," replied Fanny, determined to brave her father, since unable any longer to elude or deceive him; "and I don't see any

objection you can have to him. He is a man of fashion and fortune, and of whom I perfectly approve."

"And do you expect I will ever permit you to marry him?" demanded Mr. Montague.

"Certainly I do," cried she. "I don't see any right you have to reject him."

"You had better recollect to whom you are speaking," said Mr. Montague, in a voice nearly suffocated with passion; "and as to Sir Townly Beauchamp, him you never shall marry."

"And who has any right to prevent me?" demanded Fanny. "Am I not my own mistress? And is not my fortune in my own power?"

Mr. Montague, overpowered by this daring and insolent demand, made no reply, unable either to express or subdue the anger he felt; but Charles, who had hitherto remained a silent and astonished spectator, advanced to Fanny, and said, "How can you venture to speak to my father in this manner? Can you suppose that he, or any of your family, will

ever consent to your marriage with Sir Townly Beauchamp?"

"And pray," demanded Fanny, "what right have you to interfere?—do you imagine that I will live unmarried, and sacrifice my happiness, that you may enjoy my fortune? I know your reason, full well, for endeavouring to prejudice my papa against Sir Townly; but it is all labour lost. My fortune shall not make up to you for taking a pennyless wife. I will act as I please, and no person shall prevent me."

How dare you," exclaimed Mr. Montague fiercely, "presume to speak in this manner, either to me or before me? Do you question my authority over you? Will you venture to oppose it?"

"Ah, mamma!" exclaimed Fanny, bursting into tears, "did you ever hear of such barbarity? To be treated in this way for only wishing to marry that amiable man Sir Townly Beauchamp, because forsooth that vile ill-natured Charles does not happen to like him?"

"Fanny," cried Mrs. Montague, weeping,

"what can induce you to conduct yourself in this manner towards your father, and to apply such epithets to a brother who has always behaved so kindly to you?"

"I don't know any kindness he has ever shewn me," retorted Fanny; "but, since he has prejudiced you also against me, I don't care. I have my own fortune—of that he cannot deprive me; nor shall he control my will any more than he can abridge my rights."

"Fanny," cried Charles, whose anger was now so great as to render him comparatively calm, "listen to me, and remember what I now say: it is the last time that, as a brother, I shall ever address you. Marry whom you please,—Sir Townly Beauchamp if you choose,—and bestow yourself and your fortune on an abandoned reprobate, devoid of honour, and of common honesty. If such is your choice, take him: I shall never again make the slightest objection. Your money, yourself, and your fate, are equally unworthy of my care or my attention; for remember, that, from the moment you take the name of Beauchamp,

from that moment I shall cease to consider you as my sister; and never, publicly or privately, will I treat or consider Sir Townly Beauchamp as a brother."

"He will have much reason to regret that, I am sure," cried Fanny ironically. "Your acknowledging him will be a matter of vast consequence."

"How far it may affect your future happiness," returned Charles, "you may, perhaps, with unavailing regret, be forced one day to acknowledge; but I have now done. Settle as you please with my father; he does not require my advice or assistance: and no consideration shall induce me, a second time, to bear the insults I have this day received from you."

Without attending to his mother's supplicating looks, he then hurried out of the room; and, in a moment after, out of the house.

Mr. Montague, who had listened in silence to his son's declaration, now, with the calmness of over-wrought passion, asked Fanny under what pretence she ventured to question his authority, or dispute his commands.

"Because," cried she, "you oppose me for no reason on earth but to please Charles. You shall, however, learn, that I am my own mistress, and independent of you both."

"Leave the room this moment," cried Mr. Montague in a stifled voice, "and never again venture into my presence till better instructed in the duty and respect you owe me."

This was a command Fanny required no second injunction to obey; and, rising hastily, she hurried across the room; but stopped at the door, to declare that she would immediately marry, if it were only to obtain a refuge from his degrading tyranny, and the presuming arrogance of her brother.

For some time after her departure Mr. Montague continued to pace the room with the quick and irregular steps of ungovernable passion. Mrs. Montague wept in silence; and Sidney and Anna were too much shocked to make even an effort to sooth them. Mr. Montague, at length addressing Mrs. Montague, said, in a low and faltering voice, "Re-

member, Lucy, that Fanny does not leave this house, or quit her apartment, till prepared to obey me."

Mrs. Montague, unable to speak, merely bowed her head; and Mr. Montague left the room.

For a long time after he was gone Mrs. Montague wept without speaking; at length, clasping her hands in an agony of grief, she exclaimed, "What a scene have I lived to witness!—to see that child, on whom I had been most lavish of my tenderness, now despise my entreaties—contemn her father's authority—and reject with scorn and insult the good offices of her brother; and all this for the sake of such a man as Sir Townly Beauchamp! What can have infatuated her? Who can have instigated her to conduct of which I thought her incapable? How am I to act? What am I to do? Am I to give her up entirely to destruction; or else for ever offend the best of husbands and the dearest of sons?"

"What to say, what consolation to offer, alas! I knew not," said Sidney; "but if I

can, in any instance, render myself useful to you, I hope I need not request you will implicitly command my services. Nothing I can do can express my gratitude for the kindness and generosity of your late conduct, which I can now so well appreciate."

"The only way in which you can serve me," replied Mrs. Montague, "is by endeavouring to mitigate Charles's resentment against his unhappy sister, by representing her unjust reproaches as resulting more from disappointed passion than from design. She could not have been sensible of the impropriety of what she uttered; and, if Charles can be induced to interfere, he may prevail on his father to temporize, and not drive matters to such extremities as I fear he will, otherwise, be inclined to do."

"I will, ma'am," said Sidney, "most willingly and gratefully act as you desire; and, to comply with your wishes, Charles, surely, will not hesitate."

"Never has he yet refused to comply with my wishes," replied Mrs. Montague, weeping violently; "may Heaven bless him for his

duty and affection! My beloved child! he is now my only comfort and consolation."

Then rising from her seat, she mournfully quitted the room. Sidney not thinking it right to make any attempt to accompany her, yet not choosing to remain with Miss Watkins, from a fear of her entering into an explanation of her own conduct, which she would have felt equally disagreeable and useless, she immediately followed Mrs. Montague, and retired to the drawing-room for the purpose of watching Charles's return, to execute the commission she had given her.

There she found Mr. Montague alone, pacing the room, endeavouring to recover sufficient composure to enable him to go out, without betraying to the observation of strangers how great and painful had been the shock his feelings had received. His authority openly insulted and defied by a daughter whom he had, from her earliest infancy, treated with tenderness and regard, though never acting towards her with the exclusive partiality of her mother. Even that mother's prodigal indulgence had met a similar return: and a generous

brother grossly insulted. Nor had his niece escaped her obloquy: from regard to her father's memory, he would have cautiously endeavoured to guard her from the wound which her pride and delicacy had received, though at the time he had been treacherously led to consider her as devoid of feeling and candour; as being ready to sacrifice her affection for Sedley, whom she had professed to love, and even trying to seduce his son, from interested motives. Under such an impression, Mr. Montague had not considered it tyranny to such a heart to compel, if possible, so eligible and respectable a connexion as Mr. Ingram had offered, yet, from affection to his brother's memory he had been extremely unwilling to let her perceive that he had disappointed her schemes, or even that he suspected she had wished to form a connexion with Charles.

Such powerful, such complicated feelings, Mr. Montague, little accustomed to meet aught that could disturb the natural serenity of his temper, or cloud the happiness of a life hitherto peculiarly tranquil, found it difficult to subdue; and Sidney was even more shocked

and affected at observing the paleness of his countenance, and the expressions of conflicting anguish and anger it portrayed, than at the insult offered to herself, or the scene she had so recently witnessed; and though not venturing to speak, from inability to suggest any thing likely either to soften or console him, she could not restrain her tears, and, taking a seat on the sofa, wept in silence.

For some time after her entrance, Mr. Montague continued his rapid steps without observing her, when at length approaching her, he said, in a very low voice, "Why, Sidney, do you give way to such unnecessary sorrow? I have been unkind, ungenerous, to the orphan child of a brother, whose memory I ought to have too much respected to wound in your feelings: but the hour of retribution has not been long delayed; and by my own daughter has my unkindness, my injustice, been visited;" —then, suddenly breaking off, in a moment after exclaimed, "Curse on that wealth which alone could have influenced any child to give such a wound to the heart of a parent!"

"I am grieved indeed, my dearest uncle,"

cried Sidney, "that Fanny has been so much deceived, so much misguided, by the friends in whom she has so rashly confided; but perhaps she will be convinced of her error: she could not have intended so deeply to wound your feelings; she has been betrayed by passion into saying what in a cooler moment she will regret, and for which I most earnestly hope she will then atone. As to myself, no thought, no feeling, occupies my mind towards you, but the most grateful and tender affection for all the goodness and kindness you have invariably shewn me; nor do I, nor ought I to feel resentment at your having been led to suspect me, when you even believed that you had reason to suspect Charles, whose honour, duty, and goodness of heart, were never before questioned."

"Happy and grateful do I indeed feel," said Mr. Montague, while tears started to his eyes, "that in that dear boy I have met a return of duty and affection fully equal to my most sanguine hopes. Happy would it have been for my poor Lucy, if, like me, she had been content to love with-

out destroying the object of her affection. From infancy she has suffered Fanny to be pampered, flattered, and ruined, by yielding blind submission to her caprices, and allowing her vanity to be inflated by a knowledge of the wealth and independence she possessed. Unwilling to interfere, and but little versed in female education, I could not counteract the pernicious effects of her ill-judged tenderness. With Charles the case was very different, for, however I may have indulged him, and laughed at levity and frolic so consonant to his years and disposition, I neither fostered his vanity, nor suffered his passions to mislead his principles. The truth of this Lucy must now keenly feel, but I will not add to the anguish she endures by reproaches which her own heart will too severely make. As a daughter, Fanny is lost to me: from Beauchamp I will preserve her, if possible; but never shall I look on that girl with the feelings of a parent, who could deliberately say she considered herself as exonerated from every tie of duty to me, because her uncle's injudicious partiality centred in her person that

wealth which would have been wisely and more justly bestowed if divided equally between her and her sister."

The truth of this Sidney felt too forcibly to offer even an extenuation of the conduct that had so justly incurred his displeasure: indeed the acuteness of feeling which could thus overpower a man of her uncle's naturally cheerful and happy temperament was such as to preclude the attempt; and, without the power of mitigating, she could only weep for his distress. At length, the intensity of his emotion having in some measure exhausted itself, he embraced her, and said, "Do not, my dear Sidney, suffer the too great tenderness of your disposition thus to prey on your peace; from you, Charles, and Anna, I will still hope to experience all the happiness of a parent, for as my children will I alike consider you."

Sidney thanked him, but made no protestations of duty or affection, which she felt would be at the moment an invidious censure on Fanny. Mr. Montague was then leaving the room, when Anna entered, and observing that, though the first ebullition of anger had

subsided, yet her father's countenance exhibited the most profound expression of grief and agitation, her tenderness and sympathy overpowering every feeling of timidity that would otherwise have restrained her, she flew towards him, and, throwing her arms round his neck, exclaimed, "Oh, do not look so grieved, so unhappy, my dear papa. If Fanny will throw herself away on Sir Townly Beauchamp, you, at least, have nothing with which you can reproach yourself: I cannot bear to see you and my dear Charles made miserable by her headstrong folly."

"The misery," replied Mr. Montague, "will be all her own; but do you, my dear girl, profit by her example, nor make so ungrateful a return for the care of your parents, and the steady friendship of your justly beloved brother."

He then quitted the room, when Anna, with her natural volatility and vehemence, expressed her astonishment at Fanny's conduct.

Unwilling to censure, yet unable to defend it, Sidney joined little farther in the conversation than to soften Anna's unnecessary

harshness, and to entreat that she would assist her in endeavouring to mitigate Charles's resentment to Fanny, and to induce him to act according to his mother's wishes.

Anna readily assented; adding, "Little as my mamma loves me, little kindness as she has ever shewn me, I felt much more to day, at seeing her look so miserable, than Fanny did, on whom she has ever showered such peculiar marks of indulgence. I have often heard it said that mamma would repent the unjust preference she gave to her, though I scarcely thought it would have been so soon verified."

"Ah, my dear Anna," cried Sidney, "injustice of any kind seldom fails of meeting its deserved punishment; but you are too kind, too generous, now to resent what will, I fear, be most severely expiated."

"No," replied she, "I shall never resent it; but I cannot feel for mamma's present distress of mind as I do for that of my father, whose treatment of us all has been affectionate without being silly, and judicious without severity. Of his loving Charles better than me I have never felt the slightest jealousy; he was his

only son, and such a dear fellow, that I could not wonder at it;—indeed I love him myself better than I do any human being."

Their conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Charles, who, on hearing his father had gone out, asked how his conference with Fanny had ended

"Just as you might have expected," replied Anna; "she has declared that Sir Townly Beauchamp she will marry."

"And what did my father say to such a declaration?"

"He says she shall not, and has forbidden her to leave the house till she promises to yield submission to his wishes.'

"He has acted properly," exclaimed Charles: "young ladies who are so determined to have their own way require to be made to feel the authority they so insolently set at defiance."

Sidney now represented to Charles his mother's ardent desire that he would endeavour to act as mediator between the contending parties, as on him alone she rested any hope of preventing the misery that threat-

ened to overwhelm not only Fanny, but herself.

Charles at first positively declared he would take no part whatever; he had said so, and would adhere to his determination; but on Sidney's dwelling with great energy on his mother's unhappiness, and her so fondly relying on him for consolation and assistance, his resolution began to waver, and he at length said, "My mother deserves every proof of love and duty that I can shew her, and, whatever she desires, I will do. Any effort, however, to influence or guide Fanny, after what she said this day, would be worse than useless; but tell my mother that in every instance I will, if possible, meet her wishes. I will consult if she pleases with my father; and I will for her sake still watch over Fanny's interests, little as she deserves it."

Sidney, thanking him, went up to her aunt's room, but learning that she was with Fanny, she sent a message requesting to see her.

In a few moments Mrs. Montague made

her appearance, with a countenance that shewed how wretchedly the intervening hours had passed. Sidney, anxious to afford her the only consolation she could now receive, hastened to inform her of Charles's concession.

This information, which she hoped would have gratified, appeared to have the most opposite effect on Mrs. Montague; she wept, for some time after Sidney ceased speaking, with convulsive violence; and then said, her dear son's generous acquiescence could not now avail, as Fanny had been deaf to her arguments, and had reasserted the positive declaration that Sir Townly Beauchamp she would marry; she was of age, her fortune in her own power, and no human being should control her. She then told Sidney she was convinced Fanny kept up a correspondance with Sir Townly, through the medium of her maid, but requested she would give no hint of that suspicion to Charles; as, beyond every thing else, she apprehended his calling Sir Townly to an account for his conduct; and, if such an occurrence was to deprive her of her be-

loved son, she could never more feel a moment's peace.

Of this injunction Sidney promised the strictest observance; and, feeling the utmost commiseration for Mrs. Montague's sufferings, however, in some degree, deserved by her weak and unjust partiality, she sought to sooth her by the gentlest tenderness; requesting that she would accompany her to the drawing-room, and seek relief in the society of her son, wh would feel such pleasure in endeavouring console her. Mrs. Montague, weary of f less entreaties, and, disgusted by Fa... supercilious and arrogant conduct, agreed t her request.

On perceiving by his mother's countenance what a morning she had passed, Charles's cheeks glowed with indignation; but, checking his feelings in pity to her's, without reverting to the present state of affairs, he took so much pains to enliven her, that he at length succeeded.

At dinner the family was joined by Mr. Montague; and, as no mention was made of Fanny, Charles succeeded in promoting some-

thing like general conversation, in which Sidney and Anna took infinite pains to assist. The evening was passed pretty much in the same way; as Mrs. Montague, in compliance with the united request of her husband and son, forbore again going to Fanny's apartment; though Miss Watkins, from a desire of obliging her sister, sat with her till she retired for the night.

CHAP. XIX.

THE next day nothing peculiar occurred: Fanny continued in her room, persisting in her resolution of marrying Sir Townly Beauchamp; and Mrs. Montague accounted for her absence from the drawing-room by saying she was confined with a cold.

The morning of the succeeding day the same ominous calm prevailed: but, as Miss Watkins was engaged to dine abroad, the moment the cloth was removed, and the servants withdrawn, Mr. Montague requested Mrs. Montague to inform him of Fanny's final determination, as Sir Townly had had that day the insolence to make a second application. He had not yet taken any notice of the letter, but it was necessary for him to know her intentions; for, if she persisted in her resolution of refusing to give a positive rejection to Sir Townly's proposal,

he should insist on her setting out for Belle Vue the following day, whither he would himself accompany her, and leave Charles to escort the remainder of the family.

Mrs. Montague, turning pale at this demand, was for some time unable to reply; but, at length, in a low voice, said, "Orby, my dear, for my sake, for your own, and for that of your whole family, I beseech you to be more moderate; Fanny is of age, and be careful how you drive her to desperation."

"Am I to understand from this," exclaimed Mr. Montague, changing colour, "that Fanny persevers in her resolution of braving my authority, and of marrying Sir Townly, in defiance of my commands?"

"She says," cried Mrs. Montague, "that her affections are so much engaged, she cannot consent to give up the connexion.—Sir Townly is a man of family—perhaps it would be better to compromise matters."

"No compromise can be made on such an occasion," replied Mr. Montague; "she must either decidedly consent or decidedly refuse

to yield the obedience I desire;—her positive and explicit answer I must have, and by it I shall regulate my future conduct."

Mrs. Montague paused for some moments, and then said, "Charles, my dear boy, will you come with me, in order to convey Fanny's answer to your father? You and Anna," continued she, addressing Sidney with an expressive look, "will remain here till his return."

Sidney, understanding this as a hint that she should use her influence with her uncle, expressed her readiness to comply, though averse to any sort of interference; and Mrs. Montague, on receiving her answer, quitted the room, accompanied by her son, who, however unwilling to expose himself to Fanny's violence, could not refuse to attend his mother.

More than an hour elapsed before Charles again made his appearance, during which time Mr. Montague sat in perfect silence; but, the moment his son entered, he asked him the result of his embassy.

"Nothing, sir," cried Charles, with a voice and countenance of suppressed indignation, "that you would wish to hear."

"It is necessary, however," cried Mr. Montague, "I should hear her answer; and, whatever it was, repeat it; Fanny can no longer offend or surprise me."

"Her determination is fixed, sir; marry Sir Townly, she declares she will, and that no power shall withhold her. And let her do it, sir: give yourself no farther concern about her; she does not deserve your care."

"It is very well," replied Mr. Montague, calmly; "I desire to hear no more."

"My dear Charles," cried Sidney, in a low voice, "remember my aunt's entreaties."

Charles made no reply; but, after walking about the room for some time in silence, he approached his father, and said, "It is my mother's wish, sir, that for Anna's sake, who might suffer in the estimation of the world by Fanny's acting in public and open defiance of your authority, you would forbear from any violent measures, and farther opposition

to Fanny.—To Belle Vue she declares she will not go; and she knows her own powers too well, and has been too amply instructed in the means of using them, to enable you to make any effort to save her from a marriage which can only affect herself; you had better, therefore, sir, allow yourself some time for consideration before you take any step that may injure Anna, or be the means of sacrificing her future interests to one, for whom they have been too much sacrificed already."

"I will do nothing rashly," replied Mr. Montague; "Anna shall meet the care and protection she deserves; but at present I am not inclined to discuss the subject, and wish to be alone."

Without farther remark he quitted the room, and his son taking the hint, remained with his sister and cousin,

"My dear Charles," cried Anna, "how much I feel obliged to you! how kind and considerate you are on every occasion! Believe me that I at least know how to value your unremitting attention to the interests of your sisters. I really pity my poor papa for the

dilemma in which Fanny has placed him; but are you not surprised at the perverse firmness of her conduct?

"Surprised!" repeated he; "I cannot express my astonishment: were she heiress to half the kingdom, and her parents the greatest tyrants that it contained, her conduct would be as indefensible as extraordinary. She now talks vauntingly of independence and resistance to unjust commands; but in sackcloth and ashes will she yet regret her conduct. Beauchamp will avenge all my father's injuries; nor can she plead that she was deceived in his character, for the day I spoke to her in private I told her what I had heard,—what I knew to be true: I told her more than was necessary to disgust any woman—more, almost, than any woman ought to hear—and offered, if she still wavered in her opinion, to bring proof of what I advanced. I suppose she told what I said to Beauchamp; and that he, in consequence, seeing the reception that his proposals were likely to receive from my father, instructed her how to act, to render opposition fruitless. Had she, even

after going out with him, listened to my father's advice with any sort of temper or propriety, I would soon have rid her of him and his addresses.—I even allowed my mother this evening to offer in my name to procure her the most certain information of his principles and his character: her reply was, that she would listen to no falsehoods which could be invented of him; if *she* was satisfied, that was enough.—I could then stay no longer; though my mother still wanted to protract the conversation. Previous to our going up stairs, she had urged me to persuade my father to temporize, and I returned here to convey her wishes to him."

"And what," said Anna, "is your own opinion? how do you think papa ought to act?"

"That is a question," cried he, "I cannot answer; all I desire is, that my mother's wishes may be consulted as far as they can; and that whatever will make the business notorious may be avoided for your sake."

Anna heartily thanked him for his kindness, and Charles having proposed their re-

turning to the drawing-room, he told her to go up to Fanny's room, where his mother was sitting, and make it his earnest request to her to join them, as he could not endure to have her remain there to be insulted by Fanny.

Anna obeyed, and very soon returned, accompanied by Mrs. Montague, whom Charles informed of the conversation that had passed between him and his fatner, saying, " he would do every thing in his power to induce him to comply with her wishes; but, entreating that she would no longer give way to such immoderate sorrow for the conduct of a daughter who had proved herself so unworthy of her care; she would find sources of consolation in her other children, who would endeavour, by duty and affection, to atone for the severe disappointment she had suffered in Fanny."

This, though undesigned by Charles, conveyed a reproof which Mrs. Montague keenly felt; but, tenderly embracing him, she declared that, blessed with such a son, she never could feel unhappy: then calling over Anna, she kissed her with unusual affection.

Anna, whose resentments were not very violent, nor her feelings on any subject very keen, in a moment forgot every trace of former harshness, and, throwing her arms round her mother's neck, she declared, with unaffected warmth, that she would uniformly study to render herself worthy of her affection, and thereby contribute to her happiness and consolation.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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